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# CHRIST AND EVOLUTION



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# CHRIST AND EVOLUTION

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“The opposition between the pagan and the Christian world is sharp and well-defined. The line of demarcation which separates them is very clearly drawn. It is not an imperceptible and gradual evolution that leads humanity from the one to the other. It is rather a new spiritual influence, a mighty impulse which brings about an immediate and radical change. We know the precise date of this great change, and we have taken that date as the starting-point of our chronology. It is the Christian era that opens the annals of a new creation and a new humanity. The vital principle of this new creation is the new ideal brought into the world by Jesus Christ, or, to adhere to the simplicity of the Gospel language, it is what Jesus Christ Himself calls the New Law.”—GODFREY KURTH, *The Church at the Turning-Points of History.*

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## PREFACE

TO the Catholic, modern students of the science of comparative religion seem to treat Catholicism unfairly. As a rule they display no adequate knowledge of what Catholicism is. What knowledge they display appears to be merely external and superficial. Hence they see resemblances between the doctrines, rites, and ceremonies of Catholicism and of other religions which are only superficial, while the differences are fundamental. The Catholic sees only too many signs of the human origin of Buddhism, Islamism, and other non-Christian religions. The more he knows about his own religion the more divine it appears to be. Christians, indeed, are human, but Christianity is divine. There has never been anything like it in the history of the world. It is the greatest, the most enduring, and the most beneficent institution that the world has ever seen. It has grown and developed, it is true, but it has always preserved its identity. This is not sufficiently recognized by modern students of comparative religion.

The modern student of comparative religion seldom gives Jesus Christ his due as the historical

Founder of Christianity. He is an evolutionist, and with him it is an axiom that Christianity, like all other things, was gradually evolved out of pre-existing materials. There is scarcely room left for Jesus Christ, his mission, and his achievement. And yet, as an historical fact, Jesus Christ is everything to Christianity. Christianity can no more be explained without Him than vegetation on the earth can be explained without the sun. And Jesus Christ is a figure that is absolutely unique: there has never been any other like Him.

Another point of importance in this matter is the unity and completeness of Christianity. It is not a mere synthesis of more or less homogeneous doctrines and rites. It is one perfect organism. It is scarcely conceivable that the *Iliad* or the *Divina Commedia* has been composed by putting together parts written by different poets. It is still more unthinkable that Christianity is a syncretism of materials gathered from different sources. And yet this is what the modern student of comparative religion considers Christianity to be.

I have tried to stress and illustrate these important facts in the following pages.

T. SLATER, S.J.

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# CHRIST AND EVOLUTION

## CHAPTER I

### THE EVOLUTION OF RELIGION

**D**URING the last fifty years or so anthropologists, philologists, historians, and psychologists in considerable numbers have devoted much attention to the study of religion. They regard religion as a natural product of human activity. It is man-made, not God-given. Just as man has originated and developed language, so he has originated and evolved religion. The same methods of investigation are applied to religion as have obtained such great results in the study of language and the other natural sciences. Observation of facts, classification and comparison, and the forming of hypotheses lead to the discovery of laws and the progress of knowledge. At first there was a certain shyness in applying this method to the study of Christianity, but for some time past this shyness has completely disappeared, and some of the best authorities in the science of religion now consider Christianity, and especially Catholicism, as perhaps the most fruitful and suggestive field of research in comparative religion.



In legends, in nomenclature and terminology, in external symbols and liturgical objects, in hieratic institutions, and even in the ideas, aspirations, and concepts of faith, Catholicism offers an abundance of material for comparison with other religions, both primitive and low as well as recent and high. While it is expressly claimed that some of this material in Catholicism has been borrowed from other cults, it is suggested that a great deal of it, which is similar to what is found in other religions, originated in the response given by the same human nature to like stimuli in similar circumstances as existed among non-Christian peoples. Whatever be the cause, it is considered to be obvious that Catholicism shows very many remarkable resemblances to what is found in other religions. It has much, it is said, which is comparable with the primitive religion of the savage, while some of its higher and more important elements suggest derivation from the mysteries of ancient Greece and Egypt.

In substance this objection against Christianity is about as old as Christianity itself. It was urged by Celsus in the latter half of the second century and refuted by Origen in the first half of the third century. Celsus accused Christians of borrowing from the Persian mysteries of Mithras, and said that Our Lord had distorted Plato when He said: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." It

will be well to give Origen's answer to this calumny. Origen says:

Celsus alleges that this saying manifestly proceeded from Plato, and that Jesus perverted the words of the philosopher, which were, that "it was impossible to be distinguished for goodness, and at the same time for riches." Now, who is there that is capable of giving even moderate attention to affairs—not merely among the believers in Jesus, but among the rest of mankind—that would not laugh at Celsus, on hearing that Jesus, who was born and brought up among the Jews, and was supposed to be the son of Joseph the carpenter, and who had not studied literature—not merely that of the Greeks, but not even that of the Hebrews—as the truth-loving Scriptures testify regarding Him, had read Plato, and being pleased with the opinion he expressed regarding rich men, to the effect that "it was impossible to be distinguished for goodness and riches at the same time," had perverted this, and changed it into, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" !\*

Calvin and other Reformers of the sixteenth century attacked certain Catholic doctrines and practices on the ground that they were borrowed from paganism.

In the middle of the eighteenth century Father Baltus, S.J., published several works in France in

\* *Origen Against Celsus*, book vi., c. 16 (Crombie's translation).

defence of the Fathers of the Church who had been accused of Platonism by the Protestant minister Souverain and by Le Clerc. In 1729 Conyers Middleton, an English clergyman, published a *Letter from Rome* on the incorporation of pagan beliefs and ceremonies in the Church. He confessed in the preface that the charge was old enough, and only claimed merit for the manner in which he stated it.

Catholic writers have sometimes been struck by the resemblances they observed between the Catholic and non-Christian religions. A remarkable book was published at Basle in the year 1542 and dedicated to Pope Paul III. The title-page is interesting, and I give a translation of it: "Ten Books of Augustine Steuchus of Gobbio, Bishop of Cisamus, Librarian of the Apostolic See, a very learned man, *On the Perennial Philosophy*. A work replete not only with immense erudition and piety, but containing so to speak the marrow of all the ancient and modern philosophers, and so very well worth reading, now published for the first time."

In these ten books Steuchus defended the thesis that theology and philosophy too were ever one and the same. This followed, he said, not only from the fact that all men have one and the same Creator and are descended from the same first parents who conversed familiarly with God in Paradise, and, moreover, are all endowed with the same human reason, but the

monuments and literature of many nations attest the same. The truth is sometimes covered over and concealed by false names, but, says Steuchus, the intelligent reader can detect it lying underneath. No wonder that he makes astonishing discoveries by means of such a principle as that.

The modern habit of interpreting everything from the point of view of natural evolution has greatly increased the number of those who regard Christianity, and especially Catholicism, as a syncretism formed out of pre-existing religious materials. That it must have been so is an axiom of the modern science of religion. The axiom is stated quite plainly and baldly by Dr. J. A. MacCulloch. He writes:

“First let it be clearly understood that the ceremonial use of water in rites which are sometimes exceedingly simple, but at other times are profoundly symbolic and complex, though now inextricably connected with other opinions regarding its nature and power, has proceeded by a regular process of evolution from the simple use of water as a cleansing and purifying medium.”\*

Dr. E. Hatch, in his Hibbert Lectures “On the Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church,” stated the same fundamental principle, and applied it to Christianity. He said: “No permanent change takes place in the religious

\* *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, ii. 367.

beliefs or usages of a race which is not rooted in the existing beliefs and usages of that race.”\* The axiom thus stated is capable of a true interpretation, but it is not true as understood and applied by the modern students of the science of religion.

Jesus Christ claimed to be the envoy of God, and He changed the Jewish religion essentially by divine authority. As a fundamental principle of His teaching He demanded an absolute faith in His Person and Mission. Because the Jews as a nation refused that faith, they were cut off and rejected. Jesus came indeed not to destroy but to fulfil, nevertheless He fulfilled by changing. The Jewish religion looked forward to a Messiah that was to come, the religion established by Christ is founded on the fact that He has come. The Jewish religion was essentially national; the Christian religion is universal and is meant for all nations. The priesthood of the Old Law was restricted to a particular tribe; God calls whom He will to the priesthood of the New Law. Christ abolished the sacrifices and sacraments of the Old Law by substituting quite different ones in the New Law. The ancient sacrifices and sacraments pointed to His coming; those which He ordained were commemorations of the fact that He had come. In intimate connection with that coming were two fundamental and new beliefs of the religion which He founded: the doctrines of the Blessed

\* *Loc. cit.*, p. 4.



Trinity and of the Incarnation of the Son. The Christian Church understood from the first that it was quite different from the Jewish Church, and so it substituted the observance of the Sunday, the Lord's day, the day of His Resurrection, for the Jewish Sabbath, and it fasted on Wednesday and Friday instead of on Monday and Thursday, as was the custom of the Jews. Because of their radical difference from themselves the Christians, from the earliest times, have been pursued by the relentless enmity of the Jews.

The scientific method adopted by modern students of the science of religion is well suited for the investigation of physical science and has obtained very remarkable results. In that department of human knowledge we are dealing with necessary and uniform laws which are capable of verification. Even in the investigation of primitive religions where historical records are wanting the comparative method of study has given some interesting results, and the various explanations of them put forward by modern students of religion may be regarded as more or less probable. However, we must protest against a practice which is only too common among students of comparative religion. In their writings we constantly find some more or less plausible hypothesis advanced for the explanation of certain observed facts with a modest suggestion that such may be the explanation sought for. Subsequently

this modest suggestion is changed into an assertion that it is so. Yet it is an obvious truth that the same human action or practice, even in religion, may have a very different meaning in different circumstances. Catholics call Our Blessed Lady "Queen of Heaven," but their meaning is very different from that of the worshippers of the goddess Astarte, who addressed the Moon goddess in the same terms. Christianity is an historical religion, it was founded and it developed in the full blaze of history. Students of comparative religion stress the fact that various forms of lustration and baptism have been very widely prevalent among primitive as well as among advanced peoples. This fact does not prove that Christian baptism has been evolved or derived from similar practices in other religions. History tells us that Jesus Christ instituted Christian baptism, and history tells us what He meant by it.

If we wish to study and understand Christianity we must first of all study and understand Christ. It will hardly be of any assistance to study the Eleusian or other pagan mysteries, still less the hygienic ideas and practices of primitive savages. The important and crucial question still is: "What think you of Christ? Whose son is He?" The whole of Christianity centres in the Person, actions, and teaching of Jesus Christ. The beliefs of the Church are derived from the Gospel which He preached, and the ceremonies and rites of the Church are

either derived from the same source or have been consciously established by the Church with definite and well-known intentions and objects. To discover and understand them we need no scientific method of investigation, we need only listen to the teaching of the Church. That was the method instituted by Jesus Christ: "Go and teach"; "He that heareth you, heareth Me"; and the Church has ever faithfully adhered to that method.

But everything depends on what we think of Christ. If in deed and in truth we believe Him to be true God of true God, and if we make our submission to Him, then everything in the matter of religion becomes clear and easy. For He is the "King of ages," and Wisdom substantial "which reacheth from end to end mightily and ordereth all things sweetly." His coming on earth is the central fact of the world's history. All that came before it leads up to it, and all that followed it must be judged in its light if it is to be interpreted correctly.

Following especially the teaching of St. Paul, Catholic writers distinguish four stages in the history of mankind before the coming of Christ. During the first stage the law of Nature reigned. It was a period of wilful blindness as to the being and nature of God, and one of terrible depravity. The bitter consciousness of sin was there, and it was rendered more acute by a dim recollection of a far happier existence. Man had fallen from a higher estate, and

now his very origin was tainted, and the new-born babe needed cleansing from sin. To interpret the widespread rites of lustration of new-born babes as originating in the need for merely physical cleansing is to miss the chief element in their meaning. In spite of its depravity, the world was not yet doomed to destruction. God intervened in His creation, chose Abraham and his descendants as His instruments for preserving on earth the knowledge and worship of the true God, and promised that all nations should be blessed in his seed. That was the stage of the Promises.

The third and higher stage of the Law followed. God intervened again to guard His people from the dangers of idolatry and the inhuman vices of surrounding nations. In some respects, as suited a people in similar circumstances, the Law resembled the institutions of neighbouring nations. St. Gregory the Great and earlier Fathers of the Church attribute the retention of animal sacrifices in the Law to divine condescension towards the weakness and previous habits of the Israelites. They were no longer the same sacrifices, because now they were not offered to idols, but to the true God.\* In other respects, the Law was a barrier intended to keep the chosen people separate and aloof from their neighbours.

The Law as given by God was holy, good, and spiritual, but not perfect. It brought nothing to

\* Letter to Bishop Mellitus, A.D. 601.

perfection, because it was only a figure, a shadow, and an image of that which was to come. In the fullness of time, when the Jews had been tutored sufficiently to be ready for the teaching of Christ, when Greek language and philosophy had prepared a fitting vehicle for that teaching, when the spread of the Roman Empire had opened the way, and the sore need of the world had been demonstrated by its religious and moral bankruptcy, God again intervened and sent His only-begotten Son, made of a woman, to redeem the world. So that we do not deny the development of religion, but we stress the fact that we must look to Christ for the full and sufficient explanation of the Christian religion.

The contrast between the Catholic position and that of the modern student of the science of religion may be best brought out perhaps by a concrete example. The assertion of Dr. MacCulloch was quoted above to the effect that the ritual use of water, though now inextricably connected with other opinions regarding its nature and power, has proceeded by a regular process of evolution from the simple use of water as a cleansing and purifying medium. More definite and precise is a passage from *The Evolution of Religion*, a little book published by Mr. L. R. Farnell, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford. He writes:

The baptismal rite is a form of purification of world-wide prevalence, as has been already intimated. The washing of the new-born has been generally



interpreted as a purgation of dangerous and evil influence among the lower as well as the higher races. An interesting form of such lustration is recorded of the old Aztec home-life: the midwife washed the infant with the prayer, "May this water purify and whiten thy heart; may it wash away all that is evil." The adult, before initiation into any mystic society, usually needed elaborate purification, and this often took the form of baptism with water and occasionally with blood; and in certain of the Mediterranean religions the lustration was not merely regarded as a washing away of the old sin, but as a spiritual rebirth. In the Isis rites the baptism with water was supposed to raise the mortal to the divinity; in the description of the baptismal purification of Setis I. the words occur: "I have purified thee with life and power, so as to make thee young . . . like thy father Ra." And the gods themselves were believed to be reborn through the sprinkling of lustral water over their images. We discover the same theories held by the early Church concerning the Christian rite; the font washes away the taint of the flesh, while at the same time the divine potency of the water revivifies and recreates the catechumen, who dies to the old life and is born again; so that the font which itself was exorcised and purified in the early period was in some sense the womb of spiritual life, and the rite is both an exorcism and a communion. Very soon in the history of the Church it came to be regarded as of such serious and critical significance that the catechumen must prepare himself for it by

prior purifications and exorcisms; such ceremonies as the breathing on his forehead by the priest, the sacramental partaking of the salt, the anointing with oil, together with the utterance of a prayer that "the enemy might be put to flight," have an obvious cathartic significance.\*

All this looks very significant at first sight, but if we examine the facts more in detail we shall find that the resemblances are entirely superficial. Thus the ceremonies of the Attis mysteries, which represented the birth, growth, death, and resurrection of Attis, and were accompanied by gross barbarities, symbolised the yearly birth, growth, death, and resurrection of vegetation. As Attis rose again so would his worshippers rise to a new life after death. "Rejoice," said the priest to the initiated, as he anointed his lips with oil, "for the god is saved, and salvation awaits you too after your trials." Death made Attis a god, and death will make his worshippers equal to the deity.†

My object is to stress the fact that Christian baptism is not an evolution from pre-existing religious rites. We know from history that it was instituted by Jesus Christ, and we know from history what His intention was in instituting it. The Gospels tell us that before the institution of Christian baptism John the Baptist made use of a similar rite, but one with a

\* *Loc. cit.*, pp. 156-158.

† *Dictionnaire apologétique*, iii. 974.

different meaning and purpose. The baptism of John was a public confession of sin and of repentance for it, but he foretold that Jesus in person or through His disciples would baptise effectively with a baptism which would sanctify the souls of those who received it (Matt. iii. 11; Luke iii. 16). The meaning of Christian baptism is plain from Our Lord's own words and those of His Apostles whom He commissioned to baptise in His name. He knew perfectly well that initiatory rites of lustration with water were widely spread, it suited His purpose to employ it; and why should not He?

Our Lord is called Jesus because He saves us from our sins, He cleanses our souls from sin in baptism through the operation of His grace, and this grace communicates to us a new life, a divine life by which we become partakers of the divine nature and adopted sons of God. We are born again in baptism, die to our former lives of sin, and begin to walk in newness of life. This new life is the pledge and the beginning of life everlasting (Acts ii. 38; John iii. 5; Titus iii. 5; 2 Pet. i. 4, etc.). Christ, then, wished to communicate to us the fruits of His redemption; for this purpose He chose the rite of baptism; the rite is suitable for the purpose, as its wide prevalence shows. Why should not Christ use it? The same difficulty occurred to Tertullian while the pagan mysteries were still in vogue, and he answered it in the same way.\*

\* *On Baptism*, c. 5.

The ceremonies used by the Church in administering baptism have not a cathartic significance, as Mr. Farnell supposes. They were instituted by the Church in order to express and teach more forcibly the spiritual effects of Christian baptism. Some of them are adaptations of similar ceremonies used by Our Lord Himself, some are taken from the Old Testament, others are derived from suggestions in the New Testament, as explained at length by the Catechism of the Council of Trent. That some similar ceremonies were used in pagan rites of initiation with a totally different meaning is interesting, but the Christian ceremonies were not copied from the pagan. The Christian Church has been imbued with too great a horror of all idolatrous worship to copy anything from it. "What fellowship hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath the faithful with the unbeliever? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" says St. Paul (2 Cor. vi. 14-16).

## CHAPTER II

### INITIATION

**M**AN grows and comes to maturity slowly and by degrees. There are certain well-defined stages in his growth. We may consider the first stage as ending when he ceases to be a baby. He can now walk, run, and play with other children. He is not carried about by his mother or by his nurse. Another stage ends when he attains the use of reason. He now knows within limits what is right and wrong and begins to be responsible for his actions. The next stage certainly ends when he comes to sexual maturity. Great and important changes take place at that time. He is no longer a boy, he begins to enter on manhood. Among modern civilised peoples this stage is not usually marked by any special observances. It is usual to wait until the end of the next stage, when a young man comes of age and becomes his own master. But among primitive and uncivilised races the age of puberty is the turning-point in a man's life. At that age the society of the women and children is abandoned for that of the men. Social life with its burdens and responsibilities begins. After that



stage a man must help his tribe in war and he has a right to assist at its deliberations in time of peace. He may then marry and thus help to the continuance and increase of his tribe.

Among nearly all uncivilized races, such as those of Tierra del Fuego, North and South America, Australia, Polynesia, Melanesia, New Guinea, Africa, and the Arctic regions, the stage is marked by solemn rites of initiation. In substance, the following is Monsignor Le Roy's description of the rites in use among the tribes of Central Africa. When the day arrives the boys from fifteen to eighteen or twenty years of age are subjected to certain tests of endurance under the supervision of an expert. They enter upon a sort of retreat, living, eating, and sleeping apart, usually in the bush. During this time they repeat certain chants and dances, receive secret instruction in what is allowed or forbidden, new taboos are communicated to them, and they learn what concerns the traditions, customs, and interests of the tribe. On this occasion they renew their alliance with the totem of the tribe by symbolical ceremonies, sacrifice, and communion. All this lasts several days or weeks and often even months and years. Their black skin is made white, the colour of spirits, with powdered chalk or flour. They adorn themselves with ornaments and dance continually. A new name is given them, they are born again and discard the taboos of infancy. The distinctive marks of the tribe are put

on them, they are tattooed and their teeth are filed. They finish up with a grand festival, comprising solemn processions, dances, presents, and a banquet.\*

All the world over initiation rites contain striking resemblances. They are summed up by M. G. D'Alviella in Hastings' *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*. They comprise: (a) Mystic dances; (b) the use of the turndun or bull-roarer; (c) daubing with clay and washing this off; (d) performances with serpents and other "mad doings"; (e) a simulation of death and resurrection; (f) the granting of a new name to the initiated; (g) the use of masks or other disguises. In any case we may say that initiation ceremonies include: (1) A series of formalities which loosen the ties binding the neophyte to his former environment, among which circumcision and ritual burial are often found; (2) another series of formalities admitting him to a new society; (3) an exhibition of sacred objects and instruction on subjects relating to them; (4) re-entry or re-integration rites facilitating the return of the neophyte into the ordinary world.† Other authorities note that the completion of initiation rites at puberty is often marked not only by dancing and feasting, but by great licence and the indulgence of lust.‡ The instruction given during

\* *La Religion des Primitifs*, p. 283.

† *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, vii. 317.

‡ *Ibid.*, x. 445.

the initiation ceremonies embraces moral and religious as well as social and political subjects. Howitt knew little of the inner religious beliefs of the tribes of Australia until he himself was initiated. He and later writers have told us how in the initiation rites the existence and name of a Supreme Being are communicated to the neophyte. An image of the Supreme Being is made during the rites and immediately afterwards destroyed. Worship and prayer are offered to Him. The secrecy ordinarily observed about these matters explains how it has happened that some travellers and anthropologists have asserted that the native tribes of Australia have no knowledge of a Supreme Being and no religion.

In order to explain the resemblances which have been observed in the initiation rites of widely different peoples it is not necessary to suppose that one has borrowed from another. The passage from boyhood to manhood is a fact of human nature, and it is natural that among primitive races the period should be signalized by ceremonies. Those ceremonies will also naturally express the facts of the case. There is necessarily a dying to the past and a rising again to a new life; a death and a rebirth; a putting off of the old man and a putting on of the new. The symbolism employed has to express those facts and it is natural that similar symbols should be universally employed. Water everywhere is employed to wash off the dirt contracted yesterday in order to begin

to-day fresh and presentable. What wonder, then, that initiation rites, used to symbolize the passing of one stage of human existence and the beginning of a new and more important stage, should embrace all the world over such ceremonies as the daubing of the body of the neophyte with clay or chalk and the washing of it off by baths, aspersions, and lustrations? Instruction, too, on the more important duties of manhood, naturally also comes in at this period, which is the beginning of manhood.

It is interesting and not surprising to find that several of the rites which characterize the initiation of boys into manhood among savage races appear also in the ceremonies of initiation into the mysteries in vogue among the ancient Greeks. On this subject A. Lang writes:

“ It would be tedious to offer an exhaustive account of savage rites analogous to these mysteries of Hellas. Let it suffice to display the points where Greek found itself in harmony with Australian, and American, and African practice. These points are: (1) mystic dances; (2) the use of a little instrument, called *turndun*, in Australia, whereby a roaring noise is made, and the profane are warned off; (3) the habit of daubing persons about to be initiated with clay or anything else that is sordid, and of washing this off, apparently by way of showing that old guilt is removed and a new life entered upon; (4) the performances with serpents may be noticed, while the ‘ mad doings ’ and ‘ howlings ’ mentioned by

Plutarch are familiar to every reader of travels in uncivilized countries; (5) ethical instruction is communicated.”\*

In addition to the foregoing certain other details are recorded in connection with initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries. Such are the viewing and handling of certain sacred objects, the solemn drinking of the sacred kukeon, or gruel of meal and water, and the magical pouring out of water from sacred vessels with the appropriate spells in order to bring about a regular fall of rain.

We have already seen that all initiation rites must necessarily comprise ceremonies which symbolize the abandonment of a former stage and other ceremonies which symbolize the passage into a new stage, with appropriate instruction concerning the latter. The rites adopted at Eleusis to symbolize the passage of the initiated to their new state were and have remained secret to a great extent. But what that new state was is well known. It was a state of assurance that the future life after death of the initiated would be happy. In all probability this was brought about at least partially by means of a sacred drama exhibiting the death and resurrection of Persephone, the goddess of vegetation. Magical actions and spells which guaranteed a regular rainfall and the rising of a plentiful harvest from the dead grain that had been sown in the earth would avail also for the resurrection

\* *Myth, Ritual, and Religion*, i. 271.

of the initiate to a happy life after death. This was certainly the case with the mysteries of Osiris. The same magical rites which were effective in the restoration of the murdered Osiris to a new life would avail to ensure to the initiated a new and happy life after death. That was the essential element in many of the mysteries of the ancient world. The initiated obtained by initiation the assurance that their life after death would be happier and more blessed than it would be without initiation. Initiation put the initiated in possession of that benefit. Initiation with puberty rites made the competent member of the tribe, initiation with mystery rites made the happy shade, and placed him in the Elysian fields in the underworld. Many of the rites used in the two initiations were outwardly similar, but they acquired a totally different meaning from the different nature and intention of the two rites. Washing in the puberty rites meant the passing away of boyhood, washing in the mysteries meant the putting off of mortality and the being clothed in immortality.

We can now approach the question of chief interest in this matter. The modern student of the science of religion regards all things from the point of view of evolution. All things, including the Christian religion, have been gradually evolved from pre-existing materials. As the editors of a recent book say: "The claim of Christianity to be a 'faith once delivered to the Saints' cannot bear the scrutiny



of the historian of religions. To him it appears not a single religion, but a complex of many, justified in claiming the name of Christianity by reason of the thread of historic continuity which runs through and connects the component parts."\*

According to this view Jesus Christ may almost be discarded. He had very little to do with the foundation of Christianity. Its elements are to be found in the religious ideas, rites, and ceremonies of the early centuries of the Christian era. The name Christianity may be given to this synthesis and syncretism of religions, and in that sense the name may be justified historically.

One of the chief sources of Christianity, according to this view, are the mystery religions which were so common in the ancient world. In fact, Christianity may be called a mystery religion. One of the chief types of ancient mystery religions was that of Osiris. Osiris was murdered by his brother, but by means of magic spells he was restored to life again. His passion, death, and resurrection formed the subject of the sacred drama which those initiated in his mysteries were privileged to behold. Through similar magic spells the initiated were assured of immortality. Through the god's passion and death, and by means of the lustrations and magic rites of initiation, they would rise to a new and everlasting life after death and obtain salvation. Such ideas

\* *The Beginnings of Christianity*, 1920, p. 265.

and practices as these were adopted by St. Paul and others, and they thus became the real founders of Christianity. It is not surprising, then, to find Origen and other Fathers of the Church writing of "our mysteries" as distinguished from the pagan mysteries, and to find them applying to Christian baptism such technical terms borrowed from the pagan mysteries as *illumination*, *seal*, and practising similar rites of initiation.

It cannot be denied that there is a certain analogy between initiation into the pagan mystery religions and initiation into the Christian religion. There are obvious resemblances between the two. Such resemblances there must be in the circumstances. All religions, whether of divine or of human institution, must correspond more or less to the needs and facts of human nature. All to some extent must exhibit a process of turning away from earth and self to heaven and God. It is natural for man to express such ideas as these by rites and ceremonies. Such rites and ceremonies will necessarily resemble one another to some extent, as we have shown that they do in the case of puberty rites and mystery rites. But the resemblances between the pagan mystery rites and the rites of admission into the Christian Church are merely superficial. There are fundamental differences in their meaning and object. We have already seen what the pagan rites meant. The Christian rites meant and expressed repentance for past sin and the

purpose of leading a new and better life for the future. They were a solemn renunciation of the devil, the world, and the flesh, and a solemn engagement to lead a life for the future in conformity with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and in imitation of His example. On those conditions the rite of baptism washed away past sins and made the initiate a child of God by grace and a member of the Christian Church. All this it did through the merits of the atonement offered by Jesus Christ, who, as He Himself said, "died for many unto the remission of sins." Because He came to do that, He was called Jesus, for He was to save His people from their sins. Those who corresponded with His grace, kept their engagement, and led good lives, would receive from Him as Judge the reward of life everlasting after death. There is nothing corresponding with that in the pagan mysteries.

Moreover, it is futile to attempt to explain Christianity without Christ. He and no one else was the builder of His Church. According to His own teaching He was the Messiah, the King of the kingdom of God on earth and in heaven, He was the Son of God as well as the Son of Man, He was the Lord of the Sabbath, He was the Light of the world, He was the corner-stone, rejected indeed by human builders, but made by God the corner of the angle. Christian faith, without which it is impossible to be saved, is a firm belief in the Gospel preached by Jesus Christ. The centre of Christian worship is Jesus Christ

Himself, He is the author and finisher of our faith, He is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

The attempt to account for Christianity without Christ has only been rendered to some extent plausible by the ruthless excision of some texts from our documents and the violent distortion of others. If all other historical documents were treated in the same way as the Gospels have been treated by the rationalist school, very little history would survive.

The theory that St. Paul and other Christian leaders of the first centuries of the Church's existence borrowed their religious ideas and ceremonies from the pagan religious mysteries is scarcely plausible. There are not only fundamental differences between the two systems, but they are strongly opposed to each other. The pagan mysteries were an important part of pagan religious beliefs and worship, and so they were idolatrous. St. Paul and the early Christians were at least as strongly opposed to idolatry as were the Jews. St. Paul writes: "What participation hath justice with injustice? Or what fellowship hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath the faithful with the unbeliever? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?"\* Elsewhere he says: "The things which the heathens sacrifice they sacrifice to devils and not to God. And I would not

\* 2 Cor. vi. 14-16.

that you should be made partakers with devils. You cannot drink the chalice of the Lord and the chalice of devils; you cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord and of the table of devils."\* These latter words of St. Paul are merely an application of the words of the Psalmist: "All the gods of the Gentiles are devils."†

This doctrine is not in favour with the modern student of comparative religion, but it is a doctrine firmly held by St. Paul and the leaders of early Christianity, and the fact must be reckoned with. The early Fathers frequently give expression to it with reference to the pagan mysteries. Thus St. Justin asserts "that the wicked demons have imitated [the Eucharist] in the mysteries of Mithras."‡ Tertullian says that the devil with the mystic rites of his idols vies with the Christian sacraments.§ It is interesting to note that Tertullian explains the mysteries of Osiris as dramatizing the succession of the seasons in nature.|| The most noteworthy passage in the early Fathers concerning the pagan mysteries occurs in Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Heathen*, c. 2. He was obviously well acquainted with the pagan mysteries, and he describes several of them in detail. He says he will not abstain from describing what the pagans are not ashamed to

\* 1 Cor. x. 20, 21.

† Ps. xcv. 5.

‡ *First Apology*, c. 66.

§ *De præscript*, c. 11; cf. *De Bapt.*, c. 5.

|| *Against Marcion*, c. 13.

worship. They were exhibitions of inhuman cruelty and lust. The sacred objects which the initiated were privileged to view, touch, and handle in the initiation rites were simply obscenities which cannot be described in English. There was good reason, says Clement, why the pagan mysteries were celebrated in secrecy and under cover of night. That these things were facts is attested by modern scholars.\* There is a tendency among modern students of comparative religion to gloss over these ugly details, but they are of very great importance in our inquiry. They show the violent contrast between the pagan mysteries and the spirit of Christianity, they show that the latter could not possibly have borrowed from the former.

How then, it may be asked, are we to account for the fact that the same technical terms are used for analogous rites and ideas in the mysteries of paganism and of Christianity? In answer to this question we may refer to what is generally admitted with regard to the term *Logos*. This term was used by Philo to designate a divine Being, whom he also called the Son of God. It was borrowed from the philosophy of Plato, but its meaning was also very similar to what is said of the Word of God in the Old Testament and especially in the Sapiential Books. Doubtless some judaizing Christians were abusing the term when St. John wrote his Gospel. He desired to

† Hastings' *Encyclopædia of Religion*, ix. 818.



insist on the divinity of the Son of God, on his consubstantiality with the Father, and on the creation of all things by Him. St. John then adopted the term in use among the philosophers of his time while giving it a meaning and a content in keeping with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Christian writers have never scrupled to do the same. At the time of the Renaissance it became fashionable to speak of *Divus* Augustinus, *Divus* Thomas, instead of Sanctus Augustinus and Sanctus Thomas. Nowadays a Catholic writer may speak of the evolution of doctrine or of religion instead of the development of doctrine without incurring the suspicion of having gone over to the ranks of the mechanical evolutionists.

The application, then, of such terms as enlightenment, seal, mystery, mystagogue, and others to Christian ideas and rites need cause no difficulty, though they were also in use as technical terms in the pagan mysteries. The terms enlightenment or illumination and seal are frequently used in the Old and New Testaments. Although mystery is found in the New Testament, its meaning there is not quite the same as it has in the phrase mystery religions. It may then perhaps be conceded that when Origen speaks of "our mysteries" he is borrowing a term from the mystery religions and applying it to Christian doctrines and rites. The same may be said of the use of mystagogue and similar terms by other Fathers of the Church. The Church had learned by ex-

perience that it was advisable to use secrecy as to her doctrine and rites in certain cases, so that there is no need to explain the *disciplina arcani* by reference to the mystery religions. The same may be said of the catechuminate, a period of probation and instruction in preparation for baptism.

## CHAPTER III

### THEOPHAGY

OF recent years a change may be observed in the attitude of many non-Catholic writers towards the Catholic doctrine concerning the Blessed Eucharist. It used to be said that the Catholic doctrine was not Scriptural, and that it grew gradually during the Middle Ages. Transubstantiation, especially, was said to have first appeared during the course of the ninth century. The Reformers of the sixteenth century rejected the Sacrifice of the Mass, and most of them rejected the doctrine of the Real Presence. They claimed that they restored the Lord's Supper to the original institution, as it appears in the New Testament. Many authorities, especially among the students of the science of religion, now assert that the Reformers were quite mistaken. They concede that the Catholic and Eastern Churches have faithfully preserved the original teaching on this point, as it appears in the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians.

This change of view is not altogether due to a closer study of the doctrine, as it appears in the New

Testament and in the early Christian tradition, nor is it intended to bring any advantage to the Catholic Church. Rather the contrary. Many authorities in the science of religion claim to have discovered innumerable instances of similar beliefs among primitive peoples and survivals of them in the religions of the Greco-Roman world before and after the time of Christ. A scientific name has been given to these beliefs: they are instances of *theophagy*, and the Catholic doctrine of the Blessed Eucharist is a survival of theophagy. I propose to examine this view and see what is to be said about it.

Sir J. G. Frazer, in his elaborate work, *The Golden Bough*, is one of the chief upholders of the view, and I will borrow from him a few typical instances of supposed theophagy. Throughout our inquiry it will be very necessary to keep in mind the important distinction between facts and explanations of them. It is often difficult and sometimes impossible to get at the origin and meaning of long established customs and institutions. The common Punch and Judy show will serve as an illustration. The learned have long had their various theories as to its origin and meaning; some are more probable than others, but the true origin and meaning are perhaps lost in the mist of bygone ages. This holds good more especially of many religious customs and institutions which flourished among the peoples of antiquity. If there are survivals of them in the modern world, those

who practise them now no more think of their origin and primitive meaning than an English crowd, enjoying the fun of a Punch and Judy show, troubles itself about the origin and primitive meaning of the show. My first instance of theophagy shall be the eating of firstfruits.

### THE FACTS

All the world over in all ages before consuming the firstfruits certain ceremonies, sometimes of a religious character, have been observed. The firstfruits of the season are not gathered before the appearance of some star, or before the formal permission of the king, chief, or medicine-man. They are cooked in special ways, in vessels not used before, and sometimes with prayer and thanksgiving.

In certain cases prayers are addressed to the firstfruits themselves. The last sheaf of corn is made into a loaf shaped like a girl and is distributed in pieces to all the members of the family. In Scotland the last sheaf is made up like a woman and called the Maiden to this day. Sometimes the firstfruits are only eaten after a fast or after taking a purgative.

### THE EXPLANATIONS

I will give Sir J. G. Frazer's explanation in his own words:

The Thompson Indians of British Columbia cook and eat the sunflower root. Before doing so they

address to the sunflower root the following prayer: " I inform thee that I intend to eat thee. Mayest thou always help me to ascend, so that I may always be able to reach the tops of mountains, and may I never be clumsy ! I ask this from thee, Sunflower Root. Thou art the greatest of all in mystery. . . ."

These customs of the Thompson and other Indian tribes of North-West America are instructive, because they clearly indicate the motive, or at least one of the motives, which underlies the ceremonies observed at eating the firstfruits of the season. That motive in the case of these Indians is simply a belief that the plant itself is animated by a conscious and more or less powerful spirit, who must be propitiated before the people can safely partake of the fruits or roots which are supposed to be part of his body. Now, if this is true of wild fruits and roots, we may infer with some probability that it is also true of cultivated fruits and roots, such as yams, and in particular that it holds good of the cereals, such as wheat, barley, oats, rice, and maize. In all cases it seems reasonable to infer that the scruples which savages manifest at eating the firstfruits of any crop, and the ceremonies which they observe before they overcome their scruples, are due at least in large measure to a notion that the plant or tree is animated by a spirit or even a deity, whose leave must be obtained or whose favour must be sought before it is possible to partake with safety of the new crop. This indeed is plainly affirmed of the Aino; they call the millet " the divine cereal," " the cereal deity," and they pray to and



worship him before they will eat of the cakes made from the new millet. And even where the indwelling divinity of the firstfruits is not expressly affirmed, it appears to be implied both by the solemn preparations made for eating them and by the danger supposed to be incurred by persons who venture to partake of them without observing the prescribed ritual. In all such cases, accordingly, we may not improperly describe the eating of the new fruits as a sacrament or communion with a deity, or at all events with a powerful spirit. [The use of new or specially reserved vessels for these occasions and the practice of fasting or taking a purgative before eating the firstfruits point to the same conclusion.] . . . The intention is thereby to prevent the sacred food from being polluted by contact with common food in the stomach of the eater. For the same reason Catholics partake of the Eucharist fasting.\*

I have given the extract at some length, because it is so thoroughly characteristic of Sir J. G. Frazer's method. The allusion to the Catholic practice of fasting before Holy Communion should be especially noticed. It seems to furnish the clue to the whole argument, and yet it betrays a curious incapacity to interpret Catholic beliefs and practices correctly. No instructed Catholic would explain the reason for fasting Communion as Sir J. G. Frazer explains it. The Catholic knows that fasting Communion is only of positive ecclesiastical precept, that it does not

\* *The Golden Bough*, part v., vol. ii., pp. 81-83.

belong to the original institution of the Eucharist, and that there are several cases in which it is not of obligation. The law was made by the Church in order to repress abuses, and out of a certain feeling of reverence. The food of the soul should come before the food of the body, and the first place is due to Christ. No Catholic would admit the possibility of the Blessed Eucharist being "polluted by contact with common food."

But the whole argument seems to be top-heavy, even when limited by such phrases as "probably," "we may not unreasonably infer," and so on. If the student of the science of religion were dealing with the Gospels, he certainly would not admit the texts with the same blind credulity as Sir J. G. Frazer manifests about travellers' tales concerning the Thompson Indians and the Ainos. But even if we grant that the travellers' tales in question are accurate, the important question of interpretation remains to be solved. Curiously enough, Sir J. G. Frazer does not seem to be self-consistent in his interpretation. He talks of the deity "indwelling" in the millet, but not only is the sunflower root animated by a powerful spirit, but "it is supposed to be a part of his body." Had Sir J. G. Frazer the Blessed Eucharist in mind when he wrote that? In any case there is no parallel between Catholic belief and that of these savages. The Catholic believes that when he receives Holy Communion he does not eat bread, but that Christ

comes and unites Himself to the receiver under the appearance of bread, because he comes to be the support of his soul, as bread is the support of his body. On the other hand, according to Sir J. G. Frazer, the Thompson Indians wished to propitiate the spirit by which the sunflower root was animated in order to be able to eat the root with safety; and similarly the Ainos pray to the indwelling spirit of the millet, in order that the new millet may be wholesome. "Eating the god," the title of this chapter of Sir J. G. Frazer's book, appears to be a misnomer. There is no question of theophagy or eating the god, the poor savages wanted to eat their sunflower root and their millet without being disturbed by the spirits which they thought infested their food.

In truth, if not suggested by anti-Catholic bias, Sir J. G. Frazer's explanation seems, at least, to be fanciful and far-fetched. There is a much more simple and natural explanation of the facts, and it has been adopted by later students of anthropology. It does not require much experience to discover that it is inadvisable and sometimes dangerous to eat unripe fruits and food that is not in season. Hence the need for fixed times for gathering the harvest, and for permission to eat firstfruits granted by the chief or medicine-man. It is natural, too, to eat the firstfruits of the season with some ceremony, and for all who believe in God's providence, which is also a natural belief, to ascribe a plentiful harvest to Him,

to thank Him for it, and to offer a portion of it to His service. These simple and natural considerations may be distorted here and there, but they seem to be adequate to explain all the facts.\*

Sir J. G. Frazer claims to have discovered instances of transubstantiation, or the change of bread into the flesh and blood of a god, to be given in communion to his worshippers, among the Mexicans before the Spanish conquest, and among the Aryans of ancient India before the rise of Christianity.

Twice a year the Aztecs of Mexico made an image of their god Huitzilopochtli out of grain and honey. Portions of paste made in the same way were laid around the image in the temple. Priests in festive attire ranged themselves round the image and honoured it with special ceremonies, and with dancing and singing. "By means whereof," says the old historian Acosta, "they were blessed and consecrated for the flesh and bones of the idol. This ceremony and blessing (whereby they were taken for the flesh and bones of the idol) being ended, they honoured those pieces in the same sort as their god." Subsequently the priests distributed the pieces and small portions of the image itself to all of the male sex, who were obliged in the meantime to abstain from all other food and drink.†

At the second festival at the winter solstice the god

\* Hastings' *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, vi. 44.

† *The Golden Bough*, loc. cit., p. 87.

Huitzilopochtli was killed in effigy, and the paste image in the likeness of a man and kneaded with children's blood was eaten in the same way.\*

The Spaniards saw in these strange rites a satanic imitation of the Eucharist; Mr. A. E. Crawley sees in them a development from human sacrifice to ceremonial cannibalism. We cannot admit any real resemblance to the Blessed Eucharist, or any transubstantiation. Acosta allowed the superficial resemblances to colour his narrative, but there are indications in it that he was aware of a difference. His words—"This ceremony and blessing whereby they [the pieces of paste] *were taken for the flesh and bones of the idol*"—show that the pieces of paste were looked upon as symbols and signs only of the flesh and bones of the god; there was no transubstantiation. Transubstantiation is an idea which implies so many miracles that it cannot be admitted without clear and sufficient evidence. Protestants persist in interpreting *This is My Body* as equivalent to *This stands for My Body*, or *This contains My Body*, and the interpretation would be correct in almost any other conceivable case. "The god is eaten"—the phrase by which the Aztecs designated their rite—must be interpreted as meaning "The god is eaten in effigy," just as on Guy Fawkes' day the Pope used to be burnt by English roughs.

Catholics are convinced that they have solid reasons

\* *Loc. cit.*, p. 90.

for believing in transubstantiation, and taking the words *This is My Body* in their literal sense. He who used them on that solemn occasion was very God Who created all things out of nothing. He could make the change if He chose. He had worked innumerable astounding miracles, He had changed water into wine by an act of His will, He had fed thousands of people on a few small loaves, and He had promised His disciples to give them His flesh to eat and His blood to drink. Some of those who heard His promise understood it in a cannibalistic sense, and asked how He could do it. "The words that I have spoken to you," He replied, "are spirit and life." I will give you Myself in a real but in a spiritual way, not to be devoured in the crude way that you imagine. I will come and abide with you, dwell with you to nourish your souls and to strengthen them as food does the body. You received a new and spiritual life in baptism, you were therein born again. That spiritual life, like every other kind of life, needs food: I Myself from whom it is derived will be its food. St. Paul understood *This is My Body* in that sense, and Christians innumerable have lived in that same faith ever since the words were uttered.

The idea of personating a god was quite familiar to the Aztecs. Occasionally they would set aside a young, handsome, and high-born captive, treat him with divine honours as their god Tetzcatlipoca for a period, and then sacrifice and eat him. It was not a



case of transubstantiation. It was merely a case of personation.\* The transition from this rite to that of the paste god in human shape was easy and natural.

The case of transubstantiation, or, as he defines the term, the magical conversion of bread into flesh, which Sir J. G. Frazer discovers among the Aryans of ancient India, is still more plainly only a case of representation, not transubstantiation at all. It is a case, too, of representing not a god, but man, so that we need trouble no further about it here.

The worship of Dionysus in ancient Greece seems to have included theophagy, says Mr. A. E. Crawley. Bulls, calves, goats, and fawns were torn in pieces by frenzied women, and devoured by them raw. They believed, Sir J. G. Frazer infers, that they were killing the god, eating his flesh, and drinking his blood. The inference, however, rests on very obscure, conflicting, and uncertain data.

In the Bouphonia at Athens an ox was sacrificed and eaten. This rite, too, is obscure in its meaning. The ancients traced the rite back to Sopatros, who killed an ox which had eaten his cereal offerings. Sir J. G. Frazer explains it as an instance of eating the god, but he allows that the ox was only a representative of the corn spirit, and so, even according to his own explanation, it can hardly be regarded as a case of theophagy.

W. Robertson Smith built up an elaborate theory

\* *The Golden Bough*, p. 92.

of occasional eating of divine food on totemism. The theory remained in vogue for a time, but it is now commonly abandoned for lack of evidence.

If a belief and custom of eating a god or of theophagy ever existed at any time among any people, it was a belief and custom which belonged to a low stage of civilization. There is no evidence that there was any such belief or custom in the Greco-Roman world at the time of Christ or of St. Paul. The question of some of the Jews: How can this man give us his flesh to eat? shows that the notion was utterly strange and unintelligible to the Jews of Our Lord's time. A passage from Cicero shows that it was equally abhorrent to the Romans of about the same period. "We call our corn Ceres and wine Bacchus, we use a common figure of speech; but do you imagine that anybody is so insane as to believe that the thing he feeds upon is a god?"\*

In the judgment of a competent writer, Dr. J. A. MacCulloch, it is ludicrous to find several writers regarding the pagan mysteries not merely as resembling, but actually as the source of, the Christian Eucharist!

In discussing the theories which I have adduced, I have endeavoured to observe due courtesy to the authors of them. It is difficult to extend the same courtesy to certain recent popularizers of those theories. A popular pamphlet lies before me wherein

\* *De natura deorum*, iii. 16, 41.

hypotheses put forward cautiously, with a “probably” or a “perhaps,” are boldly asserted to be the solid and certain results of science. They are given an extension and a universality never dreamed of by their authors. Theories long since abandoned by the learned as untenable are paraded as being destructive of Christian teaching. I will quote a passage which will show how far the process has gone, and it will furnish the justification for treating the subject as explicitly as I have done:—

“Enough has now been advanced, I trust, in disproof of the oft-repeated contention that Christianity is a divinely revealed religion wholly different from and infinitely superior to every other religion under the sun. The truth is that everything in it which savours of supernaturalism has been derived from older cults, just as Christmas was from the Roman Saturnalia, and Easter from an ancient Spring festival, observed by every nation from time immemorial. As already abundantly shown, this is specially true of the God-eating Sacrament. It has come down from pre-historic times and in all essential points is the same to-day as it was three and four thousand years ago.”

## CHAPTER IV

### CHRISTIANITY AND STOICISM

THE modern upholders of the theory of evolution apply their doctrine to the explanation of the origin of Christianity as of everything else. According to them Christianity is not "a faith once delivered to the Saints," but it is a synthesis of various elements existing in the Greco-Roman world of the first century of our era. Christian ethic especially is derived partly from Jewish, partly from Hellenic sources. Large and important portions of it are derived from the Stoic philosophy. So it is asserted in *The Beginnings of Christianity*, a book lately issued under the joint editorship of the Rev. E. J. Foakes Jackson and the Rev. Kirsopp Lake, clergymen of the Church of England.

"Hellenism," they write, "unlike [Judaism] has now no separate existence, but it too lives on, for it was the genius of Christianity to weld together into a new organic unity elements drawn primarily from Stoic ethics, from the later Platonic metaphysics, from Oriental mysticism, and from Roman administration, as well as from the faith and hope of Israel."\*

\* *Loc. cit.*, p. 262.

On another page they say:

“Although Marcus Aurelius was the last great Stoic, Stoicism did not die with him. It ceased to be prominent as a separate school only because its principles had been largely absorbed by others, including Christianity.”\*

And again:

“So far as practical morals were concerned, all schools had much in common; nor did primitive Christianity itself put forth a moral system based on an elaborate theology or metaphysic. The result was that there was little or no conflict between Christian ethics and those of the Stoics, so that when Christianity found it desirable to state its ethics in systematic form, it proved most convenient for it to adapt that system which had already by experience proved itself best and had commended itself to the good sense of mankind. Of course, this adaptation was made more or less unconsciously by most Christians, although Ambrose in the fourth century was well aware what he was doing. The permanence of the Stoic ethics—for they are still the basis of Christian morality—has proved the wisdom of those who adopted them.”†

The foregoing extracts put the issue quite clearly. Fortunately we can test the issue without any great difficulty. The most distinguished philosopher of the Greco-Roman world in the second century before Christ was the Stoic Panætius. He was a Rhodian

\* *Loc. cit.*, p. 225.

† *Loc. cit.*, p. 250.

by birth, but he spent a great part of his life at Athens and Rome. At Rome he was on intimate terms with Lælius and the younger Scipio, who became his pupils and followers. He thus introduced the Stoic philosophy into Rome, where it was the dominant system of philosophy until the death of the Emperor, Marcus Aurelius. Panætius wrote a treatise in Greek *On What is Proper, or Becoming*. Cicero made this treatise the basis of his work *On Duties*, and St. Ambrose made Cicero's work his model in his treatise which bears the same title. By comparing the work of St. Ambrose with that of Cicero we shall be able to see at a glance what scientific Christian ethics owes to Stoicism and in what the two systems differ. But before doing this, it will be well to lay down one or two general principles which will help to guide our judgment concerning the questions at issue.

Human reason is quite capable of determining what is morally right and what morally wrong. It is right to show due respect and love to parents. It is wrong to steal. It is wrong to commit adultery, to murder, to tell lies. No human society could last long unless these rules of moral conduct were substantially observed. Those and similar rules have, as a matter of fact, been known and acted on by all human societies that have lasted long. They are what we call the Ten Commandments, solemnly promulgated to the Jews by Moses, but at least in



their broad outlines known to all nations. A habit of acting according to right rules of conduct is called a virtue. The virtue of prudence is a habit of choosing right ends of conduct and suitable means for the attainment of those ends. Justice is a habit of giving every one his due. Fortitude is a habit of doing what is right in spite of obstacles in the way. Temperance is a habit of acting in all things with moderation. Just as human reason can distinguish what is right and what is wrong in human action, so human reason can see that we should constantly do what is right, and classify actions under their appropriate virtues. In other words, just as human reason can discover the commandments, so human reason can discover the moral virtues. All this seems to be only common sense, and it has always been the teaching of Christianity. As St. Paul says: "For when the Gentiles, who have not the law, do by nature those things that are of the law, these, having not the law, are a law to themselves. Who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their consciences bearing witness to them, and their thoughts between themselves accusing or also defending one another."\* So that the Gentiles, who had not the benefit of the written law of Moses, nevertheless knew its moral precepts and will be judged by them.

In his celebrated treatise *On the Testimony of the*

\* Rom. ii. 14, 15.

*Soul*, Tertullian calls the untutored human soul to bear witness in its simplicity and truth to the teachings of Christianity. He explains why Christianity and natural reason agree in their teaching.

“ These testimonies of the soul are simple as true, commonplace as simple, universal as commonplace, natural as universal, divine as natural. I don't think they can appear frivolous or feeble to anyone, if he reflect on the majesty of nature from which the soul derives its authority. If you acknowledge the authority of the mistress, you will own it also in the disciple. Well, nature is the mistress here, and her disciple is the soul. But everything the one has taught or the other learned has come from God, the Teacher of the teacher. And what the soul may know from the teachings of its chief instructor, thou canst judge from that which is within thee.”\*

The classical passage on the subject is in St. Augustine's work *On Christian Doctrine*, book ii., c. 40. Among other things he says:

“ Moreover, if those who are called philosophers, and especially the Platonists, have said aught that is true, and in harmony with our faith, we are not only not to shrink from it, but to claim it for our own use from those who have unlawful possession of it. . . . Heathen learning contains some most excellent precepts of morality. . . . These, therefore, the Christian, when he separates himself in spirit from

\* *Loc. cit.*, c. 5.

the miserable fellowship of these men, ought to take away from them, and to devote to their proper use in preaching the Gospel. Human institutions, such as are adapted to that intercourse with men which is indispensable in this life, we must take and turn to a Christian use."

What else, he goes on to ask, have many good and faithful men among our brethren done? So did Cyprian, Lactantius, Victorinus, Optatus, and Hilary, not to mention those who were then living. And long before them Moses did the same, who was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.

St. Augustine lays down another important principle which concerns us here. He says that if some philosopher is discovered to have said what Christ said, we congratulate him, we do not follow him.\* He and other Fathers attribute such resemblances to the philosophers having borrowed them from the Old Testament. At any rate the test of truth in doctrine for the Catholic Church has ever been the teaching of Holy Scripture, not the authority of philosophers. It was a characteristic of the Gnostics, and practically of all heretics, to interpret the Scriptures in terms of some system of philosophy. Mr. L. R. Farnell will be an unsuspected witness to this fact. "The doctrine which laboured most zealously," he writes, "to combine the various elements of the pagan and Christian creeds was

\* *On Psalm cxi.*

Gnosticism.”\* Tertullian too vouches for the fact in a vigorous chapter of his *Prescriptions against Heretics*. “Heresies are instigated by philosophy,” he says. After giving various examples and quoting St. Paul on the subject, he concludes the seventh chapter thus:

“What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? What between heretics and Christians? Our instruction comes from ‘the porch of Solomon,’ who had himself taught that ‘the Lord should be sought in simplicity of heart.’ Away with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic composition! We want no curious disputation after possessing Christ Jesus, no inquisition after enjoying the Gospel! With our faith we desire no further belief. For this is our palmary faith, that there is nothing which we ought to believe besides.”

We are now in a position to examine in detail what St. Ambrose in his treatise *On Duties* borrowed from Cicero’s work with the same title. It is clear that he borrowed the title itself of his treatise and its division into three books, of which the first treats of what is becoming, the second of what is useful, and the third of apparent conflict between the becoming and the useful. He also borrowed what we may call the psychological opposition between reason

\* *The Evolution of Religion*, p. 36.

and appetite, but this is not an exclusively Stoic doctrine, it is a fact of universal experience, and, as St. Ambrose says, "Appetite should be subject to reason and obey it by the law of nature."\* He seems also to have borrowed from Cicero the four cardinal virtues, but he maintains that philosophers took them from Holy Scripture.†

However, St. Ambrose regards all such matters as mere questions of art and method, and doubtless he is right. "Somebody may say," he writes, "that these cardinal virtues should have been put in the first place, since the different kinds of duties are derived from these four virtues. But this belongs to art, that first duty should be defined, and afterwards divided into certain kinds. We, however, avoid art, and propose the examples of our Fathers, which are neither difficult to understand nor evasive for treatment. For us, then, let the lives of our Fathers be the mirror of discipline, not the commentary of cunning; the reverence of imitation, not the cleverness of disputation."‡ The concluding remarks of the treatise show that St. Ambrose was chiefly concerned to propose the example and sayings of the great men mentioned in Holy Scripture for the instruction and imitation of his readers. He looked upon this as the substantial part of his book. The rest was mere literary form. Even where he

\* *On Duties*, i., c. 47. † *Loc cit.*, cc. 24, 25.

‡ *Loc cit.*, c. 25.

follows Cicero in the description of some virtue or duty, he is careful not to take Cicero's examples of it. For these he goes to Scripture, and he repeatedly asserts that the philosophers borrowed their doctrine from Holy Scripture, which taught the same long before the Greek and Roman philosophers lived. The philosophers did not always agree in their moral teaching with Holy Scripture, and, as we shall see, St. Ambrose corrects Cicero in several points. But even where they agree it is not necessary to suppose borrowing on either side from the other. It is sufficient with St. Paul to invoke natural reason and conscience; the dictates of right and wrong are the dictates of natural reason, and in substance they are the same for all times and for all nations. Such universal dictates of right and wrong do not make systems of moral philosophy. All systems of moral philosophy agree in teaching that it is wrong to murder, to steal, to lie, and that it is right to honour parents and to act constantly with prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. If St. Ambrose borrowed what Stoic philosophy had to say on such subjects, that does not make his doctrine Stoical. The chief thing that differentiates moral systems is the norm or standard of morality, or different opinions about the end of moral action. St. Ambrose was quite aware of this, and he knew that Christianity differs entirely from Stoicism or any other philosophy of Greece or Rome precisely on this point. "Some



philosophers," he says, "put the happy life in the absence of pain, like Jerome; others in knowledge, like Herillus; others in pleasure, like Epicurus. Zeno the Stoic taught that the only and highest good is that which is becoming, Aristotle that it consists essentially in virtue, but that it is completed by the possession of external goods. But Holy Scripture puts eternal life in the knowledge of God and in the fruit of a good life."\* This end of human existence, to which every action should be explicitly or implicitly referred, gives a special moral quality to every human action that we perform. Philosophically as well as theologically the words of Christ are true: "If thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be lightsome. But if thy eye be evil, thy whole body shall be darksome."† The fact that St. Ambrose applied to the settling of moral questions the Christian doctrine concerning the end of life and of human action made his doctrine on duties entirely different from that of Cicero and the Stoics. When the Stoic said that the moral standard of right and wrong was what is becoming, he meant what is becoming to himself. The Stoic philosophy did not admit the existence of a transcendent, personal God, the Creator of heaven and earth. It taught that God was the soul of the world and universal reason. A portion of this universal reason, a spark of divinity, was in every man. Every man had a god within him, and this

\* *On Duties*, ii., c. 2.

† Matt. vi. 22, 23.

made him the equal of the gods. He had no need to pray to them, the wise man of the Stoics was self-sufficient, and stood in no need of divine assistance. The wise man was superior to everything in this world and at least the equal of what is to be found in the next. In truth his moral attitude was an in-human pride.\* It is not necessary to insist on the importance of this for our inquiry. It is the very opposite of the Christian attitude, and by itself it makes Christianity and Stoicism not only different, but opposed to each other. It was not by mistake that the Stoic emperor, Marcus Aurelius, was a persecutor of the Church.

The opposition between Christian and Stoic morality comes out not only in the moral standard, but in particular doctrines of importance. For Christians charity towards God and men is the first and the queen of all the virtues. Cicero says that the mistress and queen of all the virtues is justice, and accordingly his teaching on this point is corrected by St. Ambrose.† According to the Stoics the first duty of justice is to injure no one unless he has injured you. This, says St. Ambrose, is excluded by the rule of the Gospel.‡ Private revenge is wrong. Cicero, in common with all pagan philosophers, ancient and modern, magnified the love of country

\* See Seneca's letter to Lucilius, *The Divinity of Man*.

† Cicero, *On Duties*, i., c. 6, iii., c. 7; St. Ambrose i., c. 28.

‡ *Loc. cit.*

above all other loves; the Christian acknowledges the claims of his earthly country, but he is taught that after all heaven is his true country, and the Church too has claims on his affection.\*

Glory, or the love, admiration, and favour of the people, was highly valued by Cicero, and he gives it a high place in his treatise.† He teaches what it consists in, and gives rules for its attainment. Christians are taught that it is a vice to do good so as to be seen by men and for the sake of their applause. However, all men and especially clerics should have a care for their reputation and good name, and so St. Ambrose reduces Cicero's rules for the acquiring of glory to means of getting and preserving one's good name.‡ The treatise of Cicero is derived from the Greek, and for Greeks goodness was almost inconceivable without beauty. "Fair and good" was the ideal Greek character. Vice was almost necessarily ugly, as in the typical Thersites. Cicero, then, has a place in his treatise for personal beauty. St. Ambrose drily remarks that he does not understand why such a bodily gift should be put down in a treatise on morals. However, he says he does not exclude a certain modest comeliness.§ Cicero admits that the really wise man, the perfect ideal of Stoic virtue, never lived. Neither the Scipios, nor the Decii, nor Cato,

\* Cicero, *On Duties*, i., c. 17; St. Ambrose, iii., c. 3.

† *On Duties*, ii., c. 9.

‡ *Loc. cit.*, cc. 1, 8.

§ Cicero, *On Duties*, i., c. 35; St. Ambrose i., c. 19.

nor Lælius, no, not even the famous seven wise men of Greece, were in reality truly wise. Their virtue had only the semblance and external appearance of true wisdom. There were no perfect models of virtue to whom the Stoic philosopher could point and bid his hearers imitate them. This robbed the moral treatises of the ancient philosophers of any appearance of reality. To a great extent they were barren literary exercises or little more.

Moreover, moral scepticism robbed their conclusions of coercive force. Cicero himself shows this. In his Third Book he follows Panætius and discusses cases of conflict between what is becoming and what is useful. Other philosophers, he says, admit that sometimes what is becoming is not useful, and what is useful is not becoming. But he himself prefers the Stoic rule, which laid down the maxim that what is becoming is useful, and what is useful is becoming. Then he puts the question, If this be the case, how can a conflict arise between the two? He answers the question by saying that cases arise where the becomingness is uncertain and the usefulness certain. Thus murder is wrong, and the murder of a familiar friend is worse. What more certain principle of morality than that? And yet all Rome lately applauded the assassination of Julius Cæsar by his friends. Then usefulness conquered what is becoming? No, says Cicero, usefulness has attained to what is becoming. The reply is scarcely convincing, but then, as Cicero

says, the Academy gave him very wide liberty and did not attempt to tie him down to certain tenets, but allowed him to follow what is very probable.\* The treatise of St. Ambrose labours under neither of these fatal defects in the work of Cicero. The doctrine of St. Ambrose rests throughout on Holy Scripture and on the certainty of Christian faith. He could appeal to Jesus Christ, the perfect model of all human virtue, and to the example of innumerable saints and martyrs who, helped by His grace, have followed closely in His footsteps. Christian moral teaching is a rule of life that can be lived and that is lived, it is not a mere literary or philosophical exercise.

Other points, such as ambition and liberality, might be mentioned, in which the doctrine of St. Ambrose differs from that of Cicero, though the treatment of the points was obviously suggested by Cicero. There are some important points of morals which were not touched on by Cicero in his work *On Duties*, such as chastity and suicide. St. Ambrose does not treat them either in his book, but we know that if he had treated them his doctrine would have differed widely from that of the Stoics. Enough has been said to show that it is not true to say that "there was little or no conflict between Christian ethics and those of the Stoics," or that the principles of Stoicism were absorbed by, or live on, in Christianity. As

\* *On Duties*, iii., 4.

for St. Ambrose, he only did what St. Augustine and other Fathers of the Church did before and after him, and what St. Thomas of Aquin did on a larger scale in the thirteenth century. He baptized pagan philosophy and made it subservient to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

There is some good in this!  
This, after all that  
chapter ...



## CHAPTER V

### PRAYER

**A**CCORDING to the prevalent view of non-Catholic students of the science of religion, the origin of man's belief in God may be briefly indicated as follows. From the experience of sleep, dreams, shadows, trances, hallucinations, and death, men began to distinguish a spiritual part of their nature as distinct from the tangible and corporeal part. Hence arose a belief in departed spirits and ghosts. They began to pay honour to the ghosts of departed ancestors and others. Among a host of such spirits, owing to various causes, such as the institution of kings or headmen, One gradually emerged who began to be regarded as the Supreme Being. There was always something uncanny about ghosts, and primitive man feared more than he revered them. They might do him harm as well as good. At any rate it was well to know how to control them. This he learnt how to do by the use of magic and spells. When the idea of a Supreme Being was evolved and became more spiritual, magic and spells gave place to prayer. However, even in

the highest religions of to-day considerable and important traces of primitive magic and spells may be discerned in the most approved worship and the most ordinary prayers. Prayer, then, is evolved from magic and spells. Men tried to coerce spiritual beings to do their will before they learnt how to approach them with humility and submission by prayer and supplication.

Both deductive and inductive arguments are used to prove the theory. Magic and spells rest on very simple and primitive ideas. Association of ideas, of which even the brutes are capable, readily leads the primitive savage to suppose that when he melts a wax image of his enemy before the fire his enemy will waste away, and if he can get possession of a lock of his enemy's hair and burn it, destruction will overtake his enemy himself. Besides, experience has taught him that he can control other men by his stronger will power: all the more easily should he be able to control weakly and unsubstantial ghosts. The lowest savages, such as those of Australia, have not evolved the notion of a Supreme Being or religion, but they are quite familiar with magic and spells. Magic and spells everywhere underlie religion, much as the primitive rocks underlie more recent formations in geology.

There is no historical proof that magic anywhere preceded religion in the manner required by this theory. In itself magic is an abuse of religion, a kind

of superstition which attributes divine power to others than to God, or which worships God in a way displeasing to Him. In all probability religion and magic made their appearance on earth more or less simultaneously. Magic is the dark shadow which accompanies religion. Often when religion diminishes magic increases enormously, and when religion is vigorous and healthy magic decays. The proofs which are adduced for magic preceding religion in reality tell the other way. The point made by A. Lang is important. He distinguishes between the knowledge of a Supreme Being and a Supreme Spirit. Explicit knowledge of the spirituality of God may perhaps hardly be attributed to the lowest savages. The distinction between matter and spirit may well be above their mental capacity. But the concept of a Supreme Being without the express attribution of spirituality to Him would seem, as A. Lang argues, to be well within the mental capacity of anyone endowed with human reason. All that it implies is the knowledge of One Who made the visible world. The lowest savage makes some sort of instrument for his own use. When he sees a building or a bridge it is natural for him to ask, "Who made it?" Not less natural is it for him to ask, "Who made the world?" when he contemplates the mountains and valleys, the rivers, lakes, and the sea. A being to whom such a thought never occurred would be less than man. He would be stupid as a

brute beast and below the level of the lowest savages. As the Book of Wisdom well says:

“But all men are vain, foolish, stupid, in whom there is not the knowledge of God; and who by these good things that are seen could not understand Him that is. Neither by attending to the works have acknowledged who was the workman.”\*

The inductive argument that magic preceded the practice of religion is put thus by Sir J. G. Frazer:

“Roughly speaking, all men in Australia are magicians, but not one is a priest; everybody fancies he can influence his fellows or the course of nature by sympathetic magic, but nobody dreams of propitiating gods by prayer and sacrifice. But if in the most backward state of human society now known to us we find magic thus conspicuously present and religion conspicuously absent, may we not reasonably conjecture that the civilized races of the world have also at some period of their history passed through a similar intellectual phase, that they attempted to force the great powers of nature to do their pleasure before they thought of courting their favour by offerings and prayer.”†

The idea that the native tribes of Australia know no Supreme Being and practise no religion has not stood the test of further investigation. In their initiation rites especially do the native tribes of

\* Wisd. xiii. 1.

† *Golden Bough*, part i., vol. i., p. 234.

Australia manifest a belief in a Supreme Being and inculcate the duty of prayer to Him. A. Lang demonstrated this at some length in his *Making of Religion*, and more recent writers have confirmed the accuracy of his view. Thus Mr. N. W. Thomas writes:

“ At the initiation ceremonies of the Euahlayi tribe, according to Mrs. Langley Parker, an excellent authority, Baiame is proclaimed as ‘ Father of All, whose laws the tribes are now obeying.’ He established the rule that tribes at the fishing ground should keep peace; he gives rain to the orphan who cries for it; he is prayed to at the initiation ceremonies and at funerals, and his name means ‘ great ’; his figure is made in earth at the initiation rites only to be destroyed immediately after them.”\*

Satisfactory evidence of belief in an All-Father has been discovered in more than a dozen other native tribes. It cannot then be affirmed with truth that among the native tribes of Australia, who are in the most backward state of human society known to us, religion is conspicuously absent, and Sir J. G. Frazer’s argument falls to the ground. Indeed, it is now universally admitted that no race of men is known that has not some knowledge of God and does not practise some sort of religion. As man is a rational animal so he is a religious animal.

Sir John Lubbock and other anthropologists used

\* *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, ii. 245.

to assert that the natives of central Africa had no idea of religion. Mgr. Le Roy and other recent writers have proved the contrary. They may not have a clear idea of what God is, but they know well enough what He is not. He is not a man, they say, nor a departed human soul; He has never died, He is not one of the spirits or fetishes so familiar to the African native. He is not the Sun, nor the Moon, nor the Heavens, nor Light. But He lives and sees and does what He wills, He is incomprehensible.\* No material image represents Him, He cannot be influenced by magical rites and spells.† The Supreme Being is too mighty, too holy to be coerced and bent to compliance with human whims by magic and incantations. This suggests some observations of the very greatest importance. They were urged with great force by A. Lang. Among the lowest savages known to us we find a belief in a Supreme Being, moral, kindly, creative, together with belief in lower gods, ghosts, manes, and fetishes. Among other savages, somewhat higher in material civilization, we find that there remains the belief in a Supreme Being, but that there is a disposition to neglect His worship, to ascribe to Him a certain carelessness about human affairs, and to refuse Him any practical control of human conduct. Among still higher peoples, semi-civilized from the material point of view, we find a

\* Le Roy, *La Religion des Primitifs*, p. 185.

† *Ibid.*, p. 182.



crowd of venal and cruel gods sometimes worshipped with lustful orgies and even with human sacrifice. The plain facts of human religious history reveal to us a gradual process of degeneration. This is contrary to the primary dogma of evolution. According to that dogma as hitherto preached by students of comparative religion, there is and there must be a gradual rise from the lower to the higher, from the material to the more spiritual. The facts of human religious history are in flat contradiction to the dogma. We can gather those facts from the literature of Greece and of Rome. In both cases religion was purer, higher, more spiritual in the early periods than in the later. We can gather the same truth from what we read in the Bible. There was a constant tendency in historical time among the Israelites to abandon the pure monotheistic worship of Jehovah and to take up the worship of idols. It needed all the zeal and preaching of the prophets to resist the tendency. The same process of degeneration is observable among other nations on purely historical and scientific evidence. Nor is the explanation difficult or far to seek. We cannot do better than give it in A. Lang's words:

“That degeneration I would account for by the attractions which animism, when once developed, possessed for the naughty, natural man, ‘the old Adam.’ A moral Creator in need of no gifts, and opposed to lust and mischief, will not help a man with

love-spells, or with malevolent 'sendings' of disease by witchcraft; will not favour one man above his neighbour, or one tribe above its rivals, as a reward for sacrifice which He does not accept, or as constrained by charms which do not touch His omnipotence. Ghosts and ghost-gods, on the other hand, in need of food and blood, afraid of spells and binding charms, are a corrupt, but to man a useful, constituency. Man being what he is, man was certain to 'go a-whoring' after practically useful ghosts, ghost-gods, and fetishes, which he could keep in his wallet or medicine bag. For these he was sure, in the long run, first to neglect his idea of his Creator; next, perhaps, to reckon Him as only one, if the highest, of the venal rabble of spirits or deities, and to sacrifice to Him as to them. And this is exactly what happened! If we are not to call it 'degeneration' what are we to call it? It may be an old theory, but facts 'winna ding,' and are on the side of an old theory. Meanwhile, on the material plane, culture kept advancing, the crafts and arts arose; departments arose each needing a god; thought grew clearer; such admirable ethics as those of the Aztecs were developed, and while bleeding human hearts smoked on every altar, Nezahuatl conceived and erected a bloodless fane to the 'Unknown God, Cause of Causes,' without altar or idol; and the Inca, Yupanqui, or another, declared that 'Our Father and Master, the Sun, must have a Lord.' \*\*\*

This has the ring of truth about it. It is well grounded on well-known facts of history and of human nature. If it does not agree with certain theories about the evolution of religion, so much the worse for those theories. It is hardly in keeping with the theory that prayer is evolved from magic and spells and incantations.

But, according to modern students of comparative religion, there are obvious survivals of primitive magic and spells in the liturgies and prayers of high and modern religions. One of these is the superstitious use of divine names. Recent investigations have shown that it is a characteristic of primitive thought to attach a very special importance and power to names. To know the name of a person, human or divine, is to possess the means of controlling him and compelling him to do one's will. The peculiar and solemn chanting of a person's name is irresistible, it is a spell of the greatest power. By adding to a prayer the name of a god the prayer obtains a special potency. We can now understand, says Mr. L. R. Farnell, the inner force of such prayers as that of the Psalmist: "Save me, O God, by thy name"; of expressions in the New Testament concerning the casting out of devils and the healing of the sick in the name of Jesus; of the formula of Baptism, and of the conclusion with which prayers in the liturgies of the Christian Church usually end.\*

\* *The Evolution of Religion*, p. 189.

It is not necessary to be acquainted with the magical ideas and practices of primitive savages in order to understand the meaning of names in the Bible. That meaning is sufficiently clear from innumerable passages which explain themselves. In the Bible names of God and of creatures are significative, not merely demonstrative as in modern languages. The name signifies the essence, nature, attributes, authority, qualities, and characteristics of the person or thing to which they belong. Jehovah means "I am who am," and expresses the self-existence of God. Jesus means "Saviour," for He saved His people from their sins. Peter is "rock," the firm foundation of the Church. The name being thus significative of the person to whom it is applied, in biblical usage the one is frequently used for the other. Instead of saying, I am with him or in him, God says, My name is with him or in him. Our Lord said to Peter: "Thou art Peter (rock), and upon this rock I will build my church." The perfections of the person are in the same way attributed to the name. Thus the Name of God is holy, great, and terrible. The name of the Lord when invoked over a person assures him of divine protection. Thus, too, the honour, reverence, and glory which are due to God are also due to His holy Name. If the holy Name is treated with dishonour, irreverence, and blasphemy, the dishonour redounds on God Himself. Many men have been specially prone to bad language

of this kind from the earliest times. Hence, although irreverence towards God is sufficiently forbidden by the First Commandment, yet, on account of the special proclivity of man to treat God's name with irreverence, the Second Commandment expressly forbids it. This is the explanation of the Catechism of the Council of Trent. The same great authority also warns parish priests of their duty to instruct the people that reverence is not due to the letters or to the mere word which expresses the Name of God, but to God Himself. There was some superstition among the Jews on this point, it says. "Hence it is easily inferred how unmeaning was the superstition of some amongst the Jews, who dared not pronounce the name of God, which they hesitated not to write, as if the divine power consisted of the four letters of which it is composed, and not in their signification," says the Catechism.\*

Our Lord Jesus Christ is our Redeemer, our Mediator with the Father, the source of all graces and blessings. This fundamental truth of the Christian religion is ascribed in the New Testament indifferently to his Person and to His name: "Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved."† Hence our Lord Himself told His Apostles: "Amen, amen, I say to you, If you ask the Father anything in my name, He will give it to

\* Part iii., c. 3, q. 4.

† Acts iv. 12.



you. Hitherto you have not asked anything in my name. Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full.”\* By such doctrines and facts as these drawn from the Bible are explained the prayer of the Psalmist, “Save me, O God, by thy name”; the casting out devils in the name of Christ; the formula of Christian baptism, and the conclusion of prayers in the liturgy through Jesus Christ. To attempt to explain them by reference to the magical spells and incantations of primitive savages is to falsify them. History cannot be perverted in that way.

When non-Catholic students of the science of religion read or hear of the Catholic doctrine on the sacraments they sometimes attempt to explain them also by referring to magic and spells. Catholics hold that the sacraments are signs of grace, and that they cause grace infallibly. When the words of consecration are pronounced in the Mass a miraculous change is wrought in the bread and wine. Oh, says the student of comparative religion, obviously there we have the magical sign, the word of power, infallibly causing miraculous effects. Obviously the Christian sacraments are magical signs.

No, the sacraments are not magical signs. It is of the very essence of a magical sign that the magician should use it in order to compel the god or spirit to do his will. Gods and spirits are subject to magical spells, they are constrained by them, and cannot

\* John xvi. 23.



evade them. According to Catholic doctrine, on the contrary, the sacraments are signs instituted by God in order to be channels of grace to the souls of men. They are instruments made use of by God to give His grace to men. Much in the same way as during Our Lord's life on earth the Godhead made use of the sacred Humanity to forgive sin, and to work miracles, so now He continues to forgive sin and to grant other graces according to laws made by Himself through the operation of the sacraments. Whenever the sacraments give grace, they give it because God so appointed by a fixed law made by Himself in the institution of the sacraments. But the sacraments only give grace to those who receive them worthily. When the recipient is capable of disposing himself for the reception of the sacraments, he must bring certain dispositions for their reception according to the requirements for their reception laid down by Christ, or else he derives no benefit from them. The sacraments, then, do not act magically, and they are quite different from magical signs.

## CHAPTER VI

### MARIOLATRY

**M**ARIOLATRY is a term of abuse applied by Protestants to the veneration and worship shown by Catholics to the Virgin Mother of God. The term has been used by Protestants for centuries, but the modern student of the science of religion has given it a special historical setting of his own. According to non-Catholic students of the science of religion, Mariolatry may be traced to the third century of the Christian era. From that time onwards large numbers of half-converted pagans were admitted into the Church. They were familiar with female deities; they had been accustomed to pay divine worship to Astarte, Artemis, Isis, Demeter, and Persephone, and they were much attached to such worship. The words of a poet of the Middle Attic comedy are quoted as expressing the religious psychology of these new converts. "For those who have true knowledge of things divine," said the poet, "there is nothing greater than the Mother; hence the first man who became civilized founded the shrine of the Mother." The new converts to Christianity whose minds were steeped in sentiments like

this simply transferred to Mary the Mother of Jesus the love, veneration, and worship which they had formerly shown to their pagan female deities. Hence it is not surprising that the student of the science of religion finds Mariolatry an interesting and fruitful source of information. Mr. J. R. Farnell, for example, writes: "But for proving the revival on the new Christian soil of the older pre-Christian religious thought and aspiration, there is no special subject so fruitful as the study of Mariolatry."\*

I can readily understand that the theory seems plausible and even convincing to the non-Catholic. In a recent work on ancient Greek sculpture, a statue of Demeter with sorrowful but not despairing eyes lamenting the loss of her daughter Persephone is spoken of as "Our Lady of Sorrows," and another statue of Aphrodite euploia as "Notre Dame de Bon Secours." There seems no reason for denying that the practice of worshipping female divinities prepared pagan converts for the acceptance of devotion to the Blessed Virgin on their conversion to Christianity. The Bollandist, Fr. Delehaye, sees no reason for contesting the statement that pagan hero worship predisposed the mind to a ready acceptance of the rôle of saints in the Christian dispensation, and of their value as intercessors before God.† This would appear to be applicable to the Blessed Virgin.

\* *The Evolution of Religion*, p. 65.

† *The Legends of the Saints*, p. 167.

Justin Martyr, the Christian apologist of the middle of the second century, explicitly allowed that there are many analogies between Christian and pagan teaching. He rested his argument for the acceptance of Christian teaching on its truth. "If on some points," he says, "we teach the same things as the poets and philosophers whom you honour, and on other points are fuller and more divine in our teaching, and if we alone afford proof of what we assert, why are we unjustly hated more than all others?"\* St. Justin appealed to the resemblances between Christian and pagan teaching as a reason why pagans should be predisposed in favour of Christianity, but at the same time he insisted that Christians did not teach what they taught because it was like what the pagans taught, but because it was true. However, in spite of certain superficial resemblances between pagan worship of heathen goddesses and Catholic worship of the Blessed Virgin, there were radical and fundamental differences between them. The pagans offered divine worship to their deities, Catholics have never offered divine worship to Mary. This is why Catholics consider the very word Mariolatry a term of abuse; it implies that they do what they protest that they do not do, and what they know would be a grave sin of idolatry. Divine worship may be paid to God alone, and to offer it to a creature however exalted is to commit idolatry and to put the

\* *The First Apology*, cc. 20-23.

creature in the place of God. Worship is merely the external expression of the esteem which we feel for a person and the voluntary humbling of ourselves before him. It does not so much consist in the external act as in the inward dispositions of the mind. The act of bowing may be expressive of very different thoughts and feelings. It may be an act of divine worship offered to God, or an act of homage to the sovereign, or merely an act of politeness. The same may be said of genuflections and making a request with joined hands. The Catholic Church has always insisted on different degrees and kinds of worship. The highest degree of worship is offered to God alone on account of His uncreated excellence and our absolute dependence on Him. At least from the time of St. Augustine it has been usual among Catholics to call this highest degree of worship *latria*, and it is that word which gives Mariolatry its sting. Inferior degrees of worship may be offered to the angels and saints of God as an acknowledgment of their created excellence and merit. Among all God's friends Catholics have ever felt that the first place must be assigned to her whom He chose from all womankind to be the Mother of His Son made flesh for the redemption of the world. Surely that feeling is right, and Catholics are assured of it by many passages of Holy Scripture. It will be sufficient here to mention two or three as examples. St. Justin Martyr, in the middle of the second century,

sees in the Blessed Virgin the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaias that a virgin should conceive. The Archangel Gabriel, sent to her as the messenger of God, salutes her with profound reverence and gives her the title of "Blessed among women." Mary herself, inspired by God, prophesies that henceforth all generations should call her Blessed. Surely there is ground enough here for giving Mary a special honour and worship as the most excellent and the Queen of all the friends and servants of God. That is all that Catholics claim the right and the privilege to do. They worship Mary with that special kind of worship which theologians call hyperdulia. It does not derogate from the supreme honour which must be paid to God alone, because it acknowledges that all the excellence of Mary comes from God her Creator, and Catholics are convinced that in honouring her they honour God Himself. There is no need to go outside the limits of the Bible to explain the worship which Catholics delight to pay to Mary. The dedication of churches and altars in her honour, the institution of special festivals, the singing of hymns, the saying of prayers begging for her intercession with God, these and other acts of worship offered to Mary are explained fully and abundantly warranted by what is read of her in the New Testament. She was the Mother of Jesus, and as Jesus is God, she is Theotocos.

But not only is there no need to invoke the pagan



worship of female deities in order to explain historically the Catholic worship of Mary. Not only was there a worship of a deity with divine honour in one case, and the worship of a creature with an inferior honour in the other. The quality of worship in the two cases was utterly different.

We cannot do better than illustrate this by what happened at Ephesus. Several non-Catholic writers have called attention to the fact that Ephesus was the site of one of the most celebrated temples of Artemis, and that it was there that the Third General Council in A.D. 431 solemnly proclaimed Mary to be Theotocos, or Mother of God. Thus Mr. L. R. Farnell writes: "Is it nothing more than a coincidence that in the same city of Ephesus where during St. Paul's visit the fanatics raised a tumult in behalf of their Virgin Artemis, some six [four?] centuries later the people with equal ecstasy hailed the decision of the Synod that proclaimed the Virgin Mother of God Theotocos?"\* It is implied that the pagan worship of Artemis prepared the way for the decision of the General Council.

If there is any connection between the two facts it can only be by way of contrast and substitution of the purer worship for the impure. The Ephesian Artemis was quite a different character from the Greek Artemis, the sister of Apollo. The Ephesian goddess was more akin to the Syrian Astarte or the

\* *The Evolution of Religion*, p. 69.

Phrygian Cybele than to the chaste deity of Delos. She was the many-breasted, the goddess of fertility, and of the reproductive powers of nature. Her worship was characterised by gross immorality. As Sir W. M. Ramsay says: "There can be no doubt that the ritual was of an orgiastic type, and accompanied with ceremonial prostitution and other abominations." The Christian worship of the Blessed Virgin Mary could not have been derived from that of the Ephesian Artemis; the only possible connection that it could have with it is that it might have been substituted for it.

Moreover, the title of Theotocos was certainly not given to Our Lady at Ephesus on account of any local considerations. For more than a century before the Council of Ephesus it had been applied to her without question by such writers as Origen, Alexander of Alexandria, and Athanasius. Nestorius was the innovator when he denied that the title could be given to her. Before the General Council of Ephesus his views were condemned as heretical by a Synod held at Rome and by another held at Alexandria. The year before the Council, Cassian issued his work on the Incarnation directed against the heretical opinions of Nestorius. He showed that the Catholic doctrine afterwards defined at the Council was grounded on the Old and New Testament. Among other texts from the New Testament he adduces the words of the Archangel Gabriel to

Mary at the Annunciation: "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee, and therefore also the Holy that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

Cassian comments on these words at considerable length. The angel, he says, was announcing the birth of the Son of the Most High, of the Son of God, and so he begins by telling Mary how the Blessed Trinity will co-operate in the work. When the world was created, God simply commanded and all things were made by His sole command. But on this occasion of the Incarnation God the Son came and took flesh in Mary's womb, the Holy Ghost sanctified it, and the almighty power of the Father wrought it. With reason then the angel said: "Therefore also the Holy that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." But if the Son of God is God and He is born of Mary, then, says Cassian, is Mary Theotocos, or Mother of God.\*

Looking at the question from the historical point of view it is difficult to see any connection between the pagan worship of Artemis and the title Theotocos given to Our Lady at Ephesus. The place was chosen by the Emperor Theodosius, who was a friend of Nestorius and an upholder of his views. The decision of the Council given by Archbishops and Bishops of both East and West was so much a fore-

\* *De Incarn. Christi*, lib. ii., c. 2.

gone conclusion that Nestorius refused to be present at its meetings.

The Council was held at Ephesus in the cathedral which was dedicated to the Mother of God. Whether the dedication to Mary had any connection with the former pagan worship of Artemis by way of substitution I cannot say. If it had, it would only be a sort of application of the principle subsequently adopted by Pope Gregory the Great in England. The Pope instructed St. Augustine to destroy the idols in the pagan temples, but not the temples themselves. If these were well built he was directed to purify them with holy water, and erect altars with relics in them. They could thus be converted from the worship of idols to that of the true God, and the people would more readily come to the accustomed places for divine worship when they saw that their temples had not been destroyed.\* It is said that in the sixth century, at Soissons in France, a church dedicated to Our Lady was built on the foundations of an old temple of Isis, and in Rome at the beginning of the seventh century Boniface IV. dedicated the Pantheon to Our Lady and the Martyrs. It had been built in honour of Venus and Mars, the tutelary deities of the Julian family.

Sometimes those who charge Catholics with Mariolatry quote phrases and actions which at first sight seem to support the charge. Catholics have no

\* Letter to Mellitus, A.D. 601.

difficulty in explaining such cases of indiscreet devotion. They know the genuine and tender love which many Catholics have for the Mother of God, and they no more dream of taking expressions of such love quite literally than they would take quite literally expressions of ardent love in other cases.

The fact that devotion to the Blessed Virgin appeals strongly to human nature while curbing its lower impulses does not militate against its divine origin. On the contrary, it only strengthens our faith, for a religion that comes from God must be in conformity with His wisdom, and so must be adapted to the nature of man whom He has made.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE CHURCH AND GNOSTICISM

**A**N ordinary type of rationalistic opinion on the origin of the Catholic Church may be briefly described as follows. Jesus of Nazareth was a great Jewish teacher of blameless life and the loftiest ethical principles. He preached the immediate advent of the kingdom of God, and the necessity of repentance in order to prepare for the age to come. Unfortunately, He came into conflict with the religious leaders of His nation, and these succeeded in getting Him crucified by the Roman Governor. When the collapse came at Jerusalem His followers abandoned Him and went back to their homes in Galilee. There they were convinced that they saw the risen Jesus in a vision, and they returned to Jerusalem. Their beloved Master was still living, and they formed themselves into a society, a sort of synagogue, and began to preach that Jesus was the long expected Messiah, a title to which Jesus Himself had never laid claim. Persecution at the hands of the Jews forced them to break with official Judaism, and after a violent internal struggle they turned their



attention to the evangelization of the Gentiles. The language, philosophy, and religious ideas of the Gentile world reacted on themselves and on their preaching. They now gave Jesus the titles of Messiah, Son of Man, Son of God, the Servant of Jehovah, the Prophet like unto Moses, and the Lord. They identified Him with the Logos of Greek philosophy. The process of borrowing and assimilation of foreign elements continued during the early centuries of the Christian era until the Catholic Church of history finally emerged. A recent writer says:

“What is the Roman Catholic Church but a mixture, more or less mechanical, of Judaism, Greek philosophy, Roman law and morals, Roman Imperialism, Eastern asceticism, Pagan magic and superstition, with primitive Christianity at the bottom of it all?”

Of course, this account of the origin of Christianity cannot be made to tally with the Gospels and other historical documents in the form in which we possess them. But by a process of postdating, of skilful arrangement, and by boldly excising any texts which conflict with the account, it is clothed with a certain superficial plausibility.

It cannot be denied that during the early Christian centuries there was a strong tendency in the Greco-Roman world to such mixtures and syncretism as the theory supposes. This is shown by the almost

innumerable Gnostic sects which arose at that time. The Gnostic sects took what they liked from Christianity and mixed with it various elements derived from philosophy, magic, and different pagan cults. Because they did this they were called heretics, they were condemned by the Apostles and Bishops of the Catholic Church in the strongest terms, and cut off from communion with the faithful. This was the way in which the Catholic Church acted from the beginning. How could the Catholic Church excommunicate the Gnostics if all the while she herself was following the course which they pursued? It cannot be that what was heresy in the Gnostics was orthodoxy in the Catholic. It cannot be that the Church quarrelled with the Gnostics because they borrowed from Pythagoras while she borrowed from Zeno and the Platonists. Perhaps if we can elucidate this problem, the elucidation will show that the rationalistic hypothesis of Christian syncretism in the Church is untenable.

If we took our views of history from those who propound the rationalistic hypothesis of the origin of Christianity, we should suppose that in the Greco-Roman world of the first two centuries of our era there was a welter of syncretistic religions from which Christianity gradually emerged. According to these writers it is a case of the survival of the fittest in the struggle for existence among innumerable cognate religions of similar origin. If we take the facts of

history instead of the evolutionary hypothesis for our guide, a very different picture is presented to us. On the one side we see an imposing, a compact, and a world wide institution which is known as the Catholic Church, and on the other the Catholic Church is opposed by a multitude of warring and jangling sects undergoing a process of continual and rapid change. During the last quarter of the second century the struggle was at its height, and it will be well to direct our attention chiefly to that brief period of twenty-five or thirty years. During it lived such great and learned men as Tertullian, Hippolytus, and St. Irenæus, and they all took a prominent part in the controversy. From their extant works the facts appear quite distinctly. It is true that little of the voluminous literature on the other side survives, but the specimens of it which we possess, such as the *Gospel of Thomas* and *Pistis Sophia*, entirely confirm the estimate gathered from the works of the Fathers of the Church. St. Irenæus is our chief authority. He was Bishop of Lyons, but of Asiatic origin. As a boy he had known St. Polycarp, the Bishop of Smyrna and the disciple of St. John the Apostle. He was thus almost in touch with the apostolic age, and his writings are redolent of its spirit. He was not only a man of learning and of transparent honesty, but, as is not unusual with really holy men, he possessed the saving gift of humour. He saw the ridiculousness of the

Gnostics, as the heretics of the time are called, and he made fun of them and their systems. From the works of St. Irenæus especially we can see quite plainly how matters stood towards the end of the second century.

The Catholic Church was not a mere multitude of professed believers in Jesus Christ, scattered throughout the world. That theory of the Church has been evolved since then. It gloried in being one society, one organization, scattered throughout the world, and closely knit together in the bonds of an imposing unity. The Catholic Church was one in faith, one in worship, and one in government.

One in faith, because all the members of the Church, as a necessary condition of membership, believed one body of doctrine revealed by Jesus Christ. This body of doctrine was summed up in the Apostles' Creed. As St. Irenæus says: "The Church, though dispersed throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the Apostles and their disciples this faith."\* He then gives a rather long paraphrase of the Apostles' Creed. The Apostles, he says, received this doctrine from Jesus Christ, who commissioned them to preach it by His authority: "He that heareth you heareth Me, and he that despiseth you despiseth Me."† This doctrine was known not so much from written

\* *Against Heresies*, i., c. 10.

† *Ibid.*, iii., Preface.

books as from the oral teaching of the Church, and especially from the oral teaching of those local churches which had been founded by the Apostles themselves. Over these churches the Apostles had placed good and faithful men as bishops, to whom in case of dispute about doctrine recourse could be had. And then St. Irenæus adds a famous passage which I give from the non-Catholic translation published by Dr. A. Roberts at Edinburgh, 1868:

“ Since, however, it would be very tedious, in such a volume as this, to reckon up the successions of all the churches, we do put to confusion all those who, in whatever manner, whether by an evil self-pleasing, by vainglory, or by blindness and perverse opinion, assemble in unauthorized meetings; [we do this, I say] by indicating that tradition, derived from the Apostles, of the very great, the very ancient, and universally known Church founded and organized at Rome, by the two most glorious Apostles Peter and Paul; as also [by pointing out] the faith preached to men, which comes down to our time by means of the successions of the bishops. For it is a matter of necessity that every church should agree with this church on account of its pre-eminent authority.”\*

Tertullian adopts the same line of argument, *On Prescription*, cc. 13, 35 ff. He denies that heretics have any right to be called Christians, inasmuch as

\* *Against Heresies*, iii., c. 3.



they teach their own opinions and not the Gospel of Christ committed to the Apostles and their successors.

The Christians of the second century were one in worship. As St. Justin explains in his first *Apology*, written about the middle of the century, on Sundays all who lived in cities or in the country assembled together in one place, where portions of the Gospels were read to them and the bishop preached to them. The Eucharist was celebrated, which they believed to be the very flesh and blood of that Jesus Who was made flesh, and not common bread and wine. All present received Holy Communion, but from this not only the unbaptized, but heretics also and schismatics were debarred. Heretics were excommunicated.\* The Christians of the second century were also one in government. The local churches for religious purposes were under the authority of the local presbyters and bishops. The Metropolitan, or the bishop of the chief city of a Roman Province, presided over the other bishops of the province. But a central authority with jurisdiction over the whole Catholic Church was also recognized and acknowledged. When the grave dispute about the obligation of the law of Moses and of circumcision broke out during the Apostles' lifetime, the Apostles and ancients came together and held the First General Council of the Church at Jerusalem.† When the

\* *First Apology*, cc. 66, 67.

† Acts xv. 6 ff.



matter had been debated in the Council, a Conciliar decree was issued in the following terms:

“ It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay no further burden upon you than these necessary things: that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled and from fornication.”

The very terms of this positive law of the infant Church show that she was fully conscious of the plenitude of her power, but that she desired to use it with wisdom and moderation. The obligation to abstain from things offered to idols continued to bind Catholics for some centuries, and one of the accusations made against the Gnostics is that they refused to obey the injunction—they refused to obey the positive law of the Church. It was recognized, then, from the beginning that the whole Catholic Church was subject to the authority of General Councils. Still, General Councils were not the ordinary means chosen by Jesus Christ in order to safeguard and preserve the unity of His Church. He chose to make it subject to the authority of one man acting as His Vicar. According to His designs this was the chief means for maintaining that unity in His Church which He had so much at heart, and which He intended to serve as a perpetual demonstration that He Himself had been sent by God. This is not the place to dwell upon the proofs of Peter's

prerogative. It will be sufficient for our purpose merely to indicate a few prominent occasions in which we see him and his successors exercising their office during the first two centuries of the existence of the Church.

The sacred writer gives an account of the 120 persons who were gathered together in Jerusalem expecting the coming of the Holy Spirit, and who formed the infant Church. A list of the Apostles naturally comes first, and St. Peter's name is the first on the list, as is uniformly the case in similar lists in the Gospels. St. Peter points out to the same assembly the necessity of choosing someone to fill the place of the fallen Judas, and indicates the qualities which such a one must possess. St. Peter is the first to begin the preaching of the Gospel after the descent of the Holy Ghost. He is the first to initiate the reception of the Gentiles into the Church by receiving Cornelius. After much discussion at the Council of Jerusalem Peter rose and indicated the lines on which the Conciliar decree should be drawn up. Towards the end of the first century Pope Clement wrote a most powerful letter, as St. Irenæus calls it, to the Corinthians, bidding them to keep peace and concord among themselves. At the end of the next century, Pope Victor commanded the churches of Asia which kept Easter according to the law of Moses to follow the practice of the Catholic Church under pain of being cut off

from the unity of the Church. The churches of Asia were obstinate, not because they refused to acknowledge the authority of the Pope, but because they said it was better to obey God rather than man. They had an erroneous conscience on the point.

Such, then, was the unity of the Catholic Church at the end of the second century, consciously cherished and maintained by her members as being in accordance with the express will and command of Jesus Christ, her divine Founder.

As unity was the distinguishing mark and characteristic of the Catholic Church, so diversity was the distinguishing mark and characteristic of the Gnostic sects. St. Irenæus mentions and describes the tenets of some twenty of them, and Hippolytus adds some ten others. They not only differed from each other, they continually changed their own opinions. Tertullian says that he knew only of one follower of Valentinus who adhered to his master's doctrine, all the others had introduced into it changes of their own.

It was not love of truth that caused the heresiarchs to abandon Catholic unity and set up religious systems of their own. Spiritual pride, ambition, greed, and other vices were the cause of their defection. Simon Magus, the father of them all, gave out that he was the supreme God, who had manifested himself as the Father to the Samaritans, as the Son to the Jews, and as the Holy Spirit to the rest of the world.

Valentinus, Tertullian tells us, wanted to be a bishop, and when another was preferred to him, pique and disappointed ambition determined him to do what he could to ruin the Church.

Although a few affected an ascetic mode of life, unblushing lying and looseness of morals characterized them as a whole. They had no hesitation in corrupting the Scriptures and trying to foist apocryphal gospels and false revelations on the world. The puerile details of the *Gospel of Thomas* and the supposed revelations of Our Lord given in *Pistis Sophia* are in strong contrast to the sobriety of the New Testament. Many of the heresiarchs were men of learning and ability. They were steeped in Greek philosophy, astrology, magic, oriental mysticism, and the nature-worship of Egypt. They mixed various elements taken from these sources with Jewish and Christian doctrine. The result was a total and to our minds a strange perversion of Christian truth. That the modern infidel world should take a keen interest in them is curious, but perhaps not surprising. An interesting point is mentioned by Justin Martyr. The Roman Government did not persecute heretics. They were not prepared to die for their opinions as the Catholics died for the faith. They were not obstinate. The Roman Government was shrewd and recognized the important difference.

## CHAPTER VIII

### GNOSTIC REDEMPTION

THERE is abundant historical evidence of the state of the Christian world during the last quarter of the second century of our era. The outstanding fact is the existence at that time of a fully organized, closely knit society which called itself the Catholic Church. It extended far beyond the boundaries of the Roman Empire. It was united in belief, in worship, and in government. It traced its descent from the Apostles of Jesus Christ, but it ascribed its origin and foundation to Jesus Christ Himself, in whom it believed as true God and true man. He had gathered the Apostles together, taught them a body of doctrines which they called His Gospel, and commanded them to preach the same to all nations. After His ascension into heaven they proceeded to fulfil this injunction, and committed part of their teaching to writing which composes the New Testament. The oral teaching of the bishops of the Church was accepted as the rule of Christian belief, and the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were revered as the Word of God. When questions arose concerning the faith they were

settled by the bishops, who appealed to Holy Scripture and the traditional teaching of the Church, and good Catholics acquiesced in their decisions. Anyone who refused to accept the teaching of the Church, and taught anything contrary to Holy Scripture and tradition, was called a heretic. There had been such from the beginning. The Apostles had commanded the faithful to avoid them, and not even to greet them. They were self-condemned, reprobate, excluded from the Church and from the kingdom of heaven. Even the mildest and most charitable Apostles were uncompromising in their condemnation and treatment of heretics. The preservation of the teaching and work of Jesus Christ was at stake, and life itself was willingly laid down for that. Two characteristic stories are told by St. Irenæus.\* St. Polycarp, whom St. Irenæus knew as a boy, was a disciple of St. John the Evangelist, and had been appointed Bishop of Smyrna by him. St. Polycarp used to tell that on one occasion when St. John went to take a bath he saw the Gnostic heretic Cerinthus inside the baths. He rushed out at once, exclaiming: "Let us fly, lest the roof fall down upon us, because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within." Marcion, another noted Gnostic heretic, once asked Polycarp himself: "Do you not know me?" "I know you for the first-born of the Devil," was St. Polycarp's stern reply.

\* *Against Heresies*, iii., c. 3.



Arrayed in opposition to the Catholic Church were innumerable sects of heretics. There was no unity among them, their distinguishing feature was a great diversity with each other and with themselves. They refused to take their doctrine from the Catholic Church or from tradition. They mutilated Scripture and interpreted it in their own way, which was different from the received interpretation of the Catholic Church. They grounded their teaching on the tenets of some school of philosophy or on the poets, and interpreted Christian doctrine, just like any modernist, in terms of those tenets and imaginations. While Christianity teaches simply that God created all things visible and invisible, philosophy had always found it difficult to find a bridge between the finite and the infinite. The Gnostic heretics tried to bridge the chasm by their invention of intermediate beings called *Æons*. These *Æons* were emanations of the Supreme Being and they created man and the universe. Another question which has ever been a stumbling block for philosophy is the origin of evil. Persian dualism explained the mystery by postulating a good and bad Creator. Ormuzd created good and light, Ahriman created evil and darkness. Between these a perpetual conflict is waged.

It will be instructive and interesting to take some fundamental Christian dogma and contrast the Christian exposition of it with the opinions of the

heretics. We cannot do better than select for our purpose the doctrine of redemption.

The Christian doctrine of redemption as taught by the Catholic Church is set forth in numberless texts of the Old and New Testament. It may be summarized briefly as follows. By disobeying God's commandments and committing sin man had made himself the slave of sin and of the devil. He had no power to free himself from this state of slavery. Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, came on earth fully conscious of the shameful death that awaited him at the hands of bad men. He accepted that death, and His acceptance was approved and ratified by His heavenly Father. His acceptance was now an act of obedience to His Father's will, and by His free and willing obedience to that will in accepting His Passion and death on the Cross He offered Himself a sacrifice and made satisfaction for the disobedience and sins of men. By that shedding of Christ's blood man is redeemed from the slavery of sin, his sins are forgiven, he is reconciled with God, receives justification and the adoption of a son of God, all spiritual gifts and graces, and a title to life everlasting.

St. Irenæus shows that all this was part of the doctrinal teaching of the Catholic Church in his time, but he added a feature of his own, apparently intending it as some sort of explanation of the dogma. He says that Christ shed His blood and gave it as the

price of our redemption to the devil, and thus freed us from his power not with violence, but by persuasion, "as it became God to receive what He willed by persuasion, and not by force, so that neither might justice be violated, nor God's ancient creation perish."\* This theory is not in keeping with St. Irenæus' own teaching, according to which the devil tyrannized unjustly over man and had no right to detain him in bondage. In spite of this it maintained its place as a theological opinion till it was shown to be baseless by St. Anselm, but it never formed part of the Catholic dogma of redemption. It was not grounded on Scripture or tradition, and it was not in harmony with them, and so in process of time it was discarded.

Very different from the Catholic doctrine of redemption were those of the Gnostic heretics, for St. Irenæus assures us that there were as many different schemes of redemption taught among them as there were teachers.† Some struck at the very foundation of the Catholic doctrine by denying the reality of the Incarnation. The body of Jesus Christ was not material, it was not of flesh, the Word was not made flesh. The Demiurge with unspeakable skill begirt Christ with a visible and tangible body so as to be capable of suffering, yet this body was immaterial, for matter is incapable of salvation.‡

\* *Against Heresies*, v., c. 1.

† *Ibid.*, i., c. 21.

‡ Irenæus, *Against Heresies*, i., c. 6.

Basilides asserted that before the crucifixion Jesus transfigured Himself into Simon of Cyrene, while Simon was made like to Jesus and crucified in His place. Others distinguished different beings in Jesus Christ. The Æon, Christ, descended on Jesus at his baptism, who then began to teach and to work miracles, but before the crucifixion Christ departed from him.

According to Catholic doctrine the fruits of redemption are chiefly applied to the individual soul by means of the sacrament of baptism, which is a spiritual rebirth and adoption as sons by God. Many of the Gnostic sects denied this spiritual regeneration wrought by Christian baptism, and substituted other rites of initiation in its stead, and thus, says St. Irenæus, they were instigated by Satan to a renunciation of the whole Christian faith.

Many others adopted the doctrine of Greek philosophy which identified sin with ignorance and virtue with knowledge. Corporeal and material means, then, such as the sacraments, cannot be the vehicles of spiritual perfection. "They hold that the knowledge of the unspeakable Greatness is itself perfect redemption. For since both defect and passion flowed from ignorance, the whole substance of what was thus formed is destroyed by knowledge; and therefore knowledge is the redemption of the inner man. This, however, is not of a corporeal nature, for the body is corruptible; nor is it animal,

since the animal soul is the fruit of a defect, and is, as it were, the abode of the spirit. The redemption must, therefore, be of a spiritual nature, for they affirm that the inner and spiritual man is redeemed by means of knowledge, and that they, having acquired the knowledge of all things, stand thenceforth in need of nothing else. This, then, is the true redemption.”\*

Another passage from the same book will help us to understand the Gnostic contrast between spiritual and animal men:

“ They further hold that the consummation of all things will take place when all that is spiritual has been formed and perfected by knowledge; and by this they mean spiritual men who have attained to the perfect knowledge of God, and been initiated into these mysteries by Achamoth. And they represent themselves to be these persons. Animal men, again, are instructed in animal things; such men, namely, as are established by their works, and by a mere faith, while they have not perfect knowledge. We of the Church, they say, are these persons. Wherefore, also they maintain that good works are necessary to us, for that otherwise it is impossible we should be saved. But as to themselves, they hold that they will be entirely and undoubtedly saved, not by means of conduct, but because they are spiritual by nature.”†

\* Irenæus, *Against Heresies*, i., c. 21.

† *Ibid.*, i., c. 6.

The last example of Gnostic schemes of redemption given by St. Irenæus is borrowed from Egyptian magic. The Egyptian priests taught that the entrance to the future world was closed by doors guarded by inexorable powers. However, the doors opened and the warders became powerless when the departed soul was duly provided with the appropriate spell and incantation. Horrible serpents and fiends lay in wait to devour the departed soul, but they too were rendered harmless on the uttering of the appropriate spell.\* The Egyptians taught that various purificatory rites practised during life were of avail to ensure the happy passage of a soul from this life to the next. In order that it might have the appropriate spell at hand copies of it were deposited in the tomb.

Just in the same way St. Irenæus writes of the Gnostics:

“Others still there are who continue to redeem persons even up to the moment of death, by placing on their heads oil and water, or the aforementioned ointment with water, using at the same time the above-mentioned invocations, that the persons referred to may become incapable of being seized or seen by the principalities and powers, and that their inner man may ascend on high in an invisible manner, as if their body were left among created things in this world, while their soul is sent forward to the Demiurge. And they instruct them, on their reaching the principalities and powers, to make use of these words:

\* Dr. Budge's *Book of the Dead*, i., pp. lxvi, xcii, 54.



' I am a son from the Father, the Father Who had a pre-existence, and a son in Him Who is pre-existent. I have come to behold all things, both those which belong to myself and others, although, strictly speaking, they do not belong to others, but to Achamoth, who is female in nature, and made these things for herself. For I derive being from Him who is pre-existent, and I come again to my own place whence I went forth.' And they affirm that, by saying these things, he escapes from the powers," says St. Irenæus.\*

The following bold and self-confident assertions could be paralleled from various spells of the Book of the Dead. St. Irenæus proceeds:

" He then advances to the companions of the Demiurge, and thus addresses them: ' I am a vessel more precious than the female who formed you. If your mother is ignorant of her own descent, I know myself, and am aware whence I am, and I call upon the incorruptible Sophia, who is in the Father, and is the mother of your mother, who has no father, nor any male consort; but a female springing from a female formed you, while ignorant of her own mother, and imagining that she alone existed; but I call upon her mother.' And they declare," says St. Irenæus, " that when the companions of the Demiurge hear these words they are greatly agitated, and upbraid their origin, and the race of their mother. But he goes into his own place, having thrown off his chain—that is, his animal nature."

\* *Against Heresies*; L. c. 21.

What a glaring contrast between all this and the teaching of the Church ! Somewhat similar to this last scheme of redemption described by St. Irenæus is that portrayed in *Pistis Sophia*, an almost solitary survival of the once abundant Gnostic literature. It represents Jesus Christ as discoursing with His Apostles, the Blessed Virgin, and St. Mary Magdalen on Mount Olivet for eleven years after the Resurrection. It is expressly stated that there were many things which had not previously been revealed to the Apostles, and Our Lord proceeds to supply this defect. What follows is to a large extent derived from Egyptian magic, Persian dualism, and the doctrine of metempsychosis, or the transmigration of souls. Persian dualism tried to explain the problem of evil by postulating two rival powers, Ormuzd and Ahriman, in perpetual conflict. The powers of good or of light dwelt in heaven, the powers of evil or darkness dwelt in the abyss of hell. In this world light and darkness are mixed together, and redemption consists in the light being freed from the darkness and returning to its proper sphere in the realm of light. Various obstacles, powers, receivers as they are called in *Pistis Sophia*, bar the way, but by spells, mysteries, and knowledge they can be overcome. All this is explained at length by our Lord, who interprets or approves the interpretation of many passages of the Old and New Testament by the same means and in

a sense quite different from that accepted in the Church.

According to the doctrine of metempsychosis, souls which are not fit for heaven are sent into other bodies until they gradually emancipate themselves from evil, matter, and darkness, and can thus return to the light. The doctrine is opposed to the teaching of the Church, but *Pistis Sophia* applies it even in the extreme case of a bad man who dies without repentance. Questioned on the point by Mary Magdalen, Our Lord explains how such a soul may be saved.

“ The Saviour answered and said unto Mary: ‘ If a sinner is deserving of the outer darkness . . . and hath not repented . . . if he shall come out of the body and be led into the outer darkness, now, therefore, if you desire to remove him out of the outer darkness and all the judgments and to remove him into a righteous body which shall find the mysteries of the Light, that it may go on high and inherit the Light kingdom, then perform this same mystery of the Ineffable which forgiveth sins at every time, and when ye have finished performing the mystery then say:

“ ‘ The soul of such or such a man of whom I think in my heart, if it is in the region of the chastisements of the dungeons of the outer darkness . . . and in the rest of the chastisements of the dragons, then is it to be removed out of them all.’ ”\*

\* *Pistis Sophia*, p. 270.

There was certainly a great conflict of religions in the Greco-Roman world during the first centuries of the Christian era. But we are without the key necessary to the understanding of that conflict, if we do not appreciate the majestic unity of the Catholic Church as opposed to the too common diversity of all other religious bodies.

## CHAPTER IX

### JESUS CHRIST

THE chief monument of Jesus Christ is the Catholic Church. It is the greatest institution that the world has ever seen. More enduring than any monument of bronze, it is a society, a fellowship of men of all races, nations, states, and conditions of life. The aim and object of this society is to offer fitting worship to God and to train its members and teach them how to lead good lives. It is a society of men in all stages of moral development, and it has always had some members who refused to live up to their profession and disgraced it by leading bad lives. Still, in very many instances it succeeds beyond all expectation, and some of the noblest, sweetest, and purest characters of which history makes mention have been members of the Catholic Church. Its unity continuing through two thousand years is an astounding miracle which excites the wonder of an unbelieving world. In spite of the utmost diversity of its members in civilization, manners, ideas, and interests, it is one in belief, one in divine worship, one in government. It has

frequently had to endure bitter persecution from the powers of the world, sometimes whole nations and provinces have been torn away from it, but in the end it always emerges safely and purified by the ordeal it has gone through. The preservation of the faith of Jesus Christ and the teaching of Christian morality are the primary objects of its institution, but it has also been the nursing mother of literature, the arts, and the sciences, and it has taken the leading part in the civilization of Europe and of the world.

In certain rationalistic circles it is the fashion to ascribe the foundation of the Catholic Church to the Apostles. St. Paul and one or two of the other Apostles even from a natural point of view were undoubtedly great men, but they were as utterly incapable of founding the Catholic Church as were the heresiarchs such as Cerinthus, Marcion, Basilides, or Valentinus. If the Catholic Church had been founded by the Apostles it would have been as short-lived as were the sects founded by these heresiarchs. The theory rests on a supposed wholesale misrepresentation of facts which is out of keeping with the obvious honesty and sincerity of the Apostles and Evangelists. We must take the documents as they stand. Both the documents and the necessities of the case require a greater Founder for the Catholic Church than the Apostles. That Founder, of course, was Jesus Christ Himself.

The preaching of St. John the Baptist prepared the



way for that of Our Lord. The burden of St. John's preaching was summed up in the words: "Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."\* When Our Lord began to preach in Galilee, the burden of His preaching also was summed up in the same words: "Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."† He went about all Galilee "preaching the gospel of the kingdom," preaching the good news that the Kingdom of Heaven was about to be established.

The Kingdom of Heaven, or the Kingdom of God, was evidently a familiar idea to the Jews. In a sense the Jewish theocracy was a Kingdom of God, a commonwealth over which God ruled in person. But the prophets had clearly taught that the Jewish commonwealth was only temporary and limited, and they foretold that it was to be succeeded by another Kingdom of God which was to be more spiritual, world-wide, and everlasting.‡

At the time of Our Lord's birth there was a general belief in the East that the time for the establishing of this Kingdom had arrived. Our Blessed Lady was assured by the Archangel Gabriel: "Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and shalt bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called [*i.e.*, shall be] the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God shall give unto him the

\* Matt. iii. 2.

† Matt. iv. 17.

‡ Jer. xxxi. 31; Dan. vii. 13; Deut. xviii. 15.

throne of David his father, and he shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end."\*

Holy Simeon had been assured by God "that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord." At the presentation of Our Lord in the Temple Simeon came too, took the Child in his arms, and said: "Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word, in peace: because my eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples: a light to the revelation of the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel."† The favourite name by which Jesus alluded to Himself was the Son of man. He thus claimed to be the fulfilment of the prophecy of Daniel,‡ to Him was given by God "power and glory and a kingdom; and all peoples, tribes and tongues shall serve Him. His power is an everlasting power that shall not be taken away, and His kingdom that shall not be destroyed." His kingdom was not, indeed, of this world, it was the Kingdom of Heaven, but nevertheless all power was given to Him in heaven and on earth.§

Our Lord Himself in a celebrated text identified the Kingdom of Heaven with the Catholic Church and claimed to be its Founder Himself. "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church. And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

\* Luke i. 31 ff.

‡ Dan. vii. 13.

† Luke ii. 26 ff.

§ Matt. xxviii. 18.

And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.”\*

There was nothing tentative about Our Lord, least of all in the foundation of His Church. The parables of the kingdom show how clearly the divine plan was mapped out in His mind from the beginning. He collected His subjects together by preaching. He Himself was the Sower who went out to sow the seed of the Word. The qualifications for being admitted to membership in the Church were repentance for past sins, unwavering faith in the Gospel teaching, and baptism, the outward sign of repentance and faith, as well as the effective pledge of a new life in Christ.

Jesus Himself confined His preaching principally to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but He showed that He knew perfectly well that He would be rejected by the Jews and that they would refuse to enter into the Church. The parable of the householder who planted a vineyard and let it out to husbandmen proves that decisively. His Jewish hearers saw the point of the parable clearly, and we are told expressly that the chief priests and the Pharisees knew that He spoke of them. Jesus confirmed their interpretation of His words by quoting the Psalmist: “The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner.”† The same conclusion is taught clearly by the parable of the king who made a

\* Matt. xvi. 18.

† Matt. xxi. 33 ff.

marriage feast for his son. When the guests who had been invited first not only refused to come, but killed the king's messengers, the king "sending his armies, destroyed those murderers and burnt their city."\* The destruction of Jerusalem was the consequence historically of the rejection of Our Lord by the Jews.

From an early period of His preaching He foretold that the Gentiles would take the place of the rejected Jews. When He had expressed wonder at the faith of the Gentile centurion, He added: "And I say to you that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into the exterior darkness."† Admission to the kingdom of Christ was to be based on faith as He explained to Nicodemus,‡ not on descent or on race.

His Church was to embrace all nations, the middle wall of partition was to be broken down, henceforth there was to be neither Jew nor Gentile, neither bond nor free. His salvation was prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to the revelation of the Gentiles as well as the glory of Israel.§ Whosoever believed in Him could obtain life everlasting. True worship was henceforth to be offered to the Father in every place throughout the world, not merely on Mount

\* Matt. xxii. 2 ff. ; Luke xiv. 16 ff.

† Matt. viii. 11.

‡ John iii. 14 ff.

§ Luke ii. 31.

Garizim or at Jerusalem. He was to be the Saviour of the world, not merely of the Jews.\* His final commission to His Apostles was: "Going therefore, teach [make disciples of] all nations," "Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be condemned."†

The Church of Jesus Christ on earth was to be a society of men, not of angels. It was to be a school for the training of Saints, in which many were as yet imperfect or simply bad. That was clearly its Founder's design. The Kingdom of Heaven is like a field in which Our Lord sows good seed, but the enemy comes and oversows cockle among the wheat. Both are allowed to grow together until the end of the world, when the final separation is made at the Last Judgment.‡ Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a drag-net cast into the sea and gathering together all kinds of fish, both good and bad.§ It is like a king who made a marriage feast for his son. After the first invited guests had refused to come, others were brought in from all sides. Among the rest was one who had neglected to provide himself with the wedding garment of God's grace. By order of the king he was bound hand and foot and cast into the exterior darkness.|| Again, the Kingdom of Heaven

\* John iii. 16; iv. 21, 42.

† Matt. xxviii. 19; Mark xvi. 15 ff.

‡ Matt. xiii. 24 ff. § Matt. xiii. 47 ff. || Matt. xxii. 2 ff.

is like ten virgins of whom five are prudent and wise, while the other five are foolish and improvident.\* He not only tolerated the reprobate Judas among the Apostles, but showed him special marks of affection and trust.

He gained but few real followers by His preaching and miracles, but He betrayed no signs of discouragement. On the contrary, He encouraged the few that followed him in words that might well have sounded presumptuous at the time, but which the event has proved true. "Fear not, little flock, for it hath pleased your Father to give you a kingdom." "You are the salt of the earth, you are the light of the world." "The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field. It is indeed the least of all seeds, but when it is grown up it is greater than all herbs, so that the birds come and dwell in the branches thereof. Again, it is like a lump of leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened."

Jesus represented Himself as the Builder of the Church, as the cornerstone on which the whole edifice rests. He acted as the Lawgiver of the new society, with plenary authority issuing His commands and making laws which were to remain in force for ever. He is the Good Shepherd of the flock, each of which He knows by name, loves, and is ready to die

\* Matt. xxv. 1 ff.



for it. He is the Vine, the members of His Church are the branches. Without the stock the branches can do nothing. If they remain engrafted on Him by keeping His commandments, His life-giving grace enables them to produce fruit as the sap does to the branches of the vine. When St. Paul speaks of the Church as the Body of Christ and Christ as the Head, he merely changes the metaphor previously used by Our Lord; the meaning is the same.

We cannot have a complete and correct idea of Christ's plan in founding His Church unless we take account of His teaching with regard to His own abiding presence in it and that of His Holy Spirit. He assured His Apostles that He would not leave them orphans, He promised to be with them all days even to the consummation of the world. He told them that He would send upon them His Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, who would teach them all things whatever He had said to them, who would abide with them and be in them. The Church of Christ is not a mere society of men, it cannot be explained on the supposition that it is nothing more than that. The Spirit of Jesus Christ ever dwells in it, vivifies it, and makes it fruitful.

Those who believed in and followed Our Lord were not all left by Him on the same level. He wished to found a new Israel, a spiritual Kingdom of God on earth. The new Israel was to have its twelve Patriarchs like the old, and so Jesus chose from among

His followers twelve men who were to be with Him constantly and whom He called Apostles. To them it was given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God, while the rest were taught in parables. He sent them in pairs to prepare the people for His own coming, to preach the Gospel in His name and by His authority, and even to work miracles. His object in doing this became clear just before His ascension, when He gave the twelve His final commission, "Going therefore, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." He gave these same men not only power to teach in His name, but authority to rule over the rest of the faithful. In case of any disagreement between Christians, if peace and concord could not otherwise be restored, the case was to be taken before the Church and the Apostles. "Amen I say to you," he told them, "whatsoever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven."\*

As Son of man Our Lord exercised the power to forgive sins during His public ministry; before His ascension He communicated this power to His Apostles. "Receive you the Holy Ghost: whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." Previously

\* Matt. xviii. 18.

at the Last Supper, after instituting the Blessed Eucharist, He had given them power to offer Mass as He had done. "Do this in commemoration of Me." Christ Himself then made a clear distinction between the teaching, governing, and sacrificing Church and the Church which is taught and governed.

The twelve Apostles were men, and experience showed that, in spite of Our Lord's example and training, they retained traces of human ambition. James and John tried to secure posts of dignity in the Church for themselves. Jesus told them that Providence, His Father, gave posts of authority to whom He willed. The highest authority in the apostolic college was evidently not for one of them. Sometimes a dispute arose among the Apostles as to which of them was the greater. Our Lord rebuked them, pointed to the example of service which He had shown them, and then told them that he who would be first among them should be the servant of the rest. He had evidently no notion of founding His Church on twelve men of equal authority among themselves. That would have been as fatuous as to found the old Israel on the equal authority of the twelve Patriarchs. While He was on earth He, of course, was Master. "You call Me Lord, and so I am." But the Church would need a supreme, visible authority after His return to His Father. The matter was of the very greatest importance, it affected the very constitution

of the Christian Church. Jesus had his plan ready from the beginning. Of His three more intimate friends among the Apostles, Peter, James, and John, He chose Peter for His first Vicar, and the first supreme Head of His Church on earth after Himself. The very first time that Peter was introduced to Him, He indicated what was in store for him. Looking upon him Jesus said: "Thou art Simon the son of John, thou shalt be called Cephas," "which being interpreted," says St. John, "is Peter." While He was in the middle of His public preaching, Our Lord showed what He meant by giving Simon the name of Peter. One day He, with His disciples, was in the north of Palestine in the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi. Suddenly He asked them, "Whom do men say that I am?" They answered: "Some say you are John the Baptist come to life again, others say you are Elias, others Jeremias or one of the Prophets." "But who do you say that I am?" again asked Our Lord. Simon Peter answered for the rest: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied: "Blessed art thou, Simon, son of John, because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say to thee that thou art Peter [rock], and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven,

and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven.”\*

By his profession of faith in the divinity of Christ, Peter showed that he was worthy to be made the solid foundation on which Christ would build His Church. What the foundation is to a building of stone, that the authority is which presides over a society of men. As the foundation, if it remains firm, keeps a building from falling into ruins, so the supreme authority over a society of men by wise and firm government keeps the society united and preserves it from disruption. That there might be no doubt about His meaning Christ repeats what His intention is, using another obvious metaphor. The keys of the city gates were in the keeping of the governor of the city. Christ says He will give the keys of the Church, the city of God, the Kingdom of Heaven, to St. Peter.

On a subsequent occasion Our Lord called out to Peter: “Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you [the Apostles], that he may sift you as wheat.” What is the safeguard provided by their Master? “But,” He continues, “I have prayed for thee [Simon Peter] that thy faith fail not, and thou in thy turn confirm thy brethren.”† He Himself would strengthen Peter’s faith, Peter was to strengthen by his guidance and authority the faith of the other Apostles. Christ invested St. Peter with the authority which had been promised him after

\* Matt. xvi. 13 ff.

† Luke xxii. 31.



His resurrection when He appeared to the Apostles on the shore of the sea of Galilee. After his triple profession of love Christ made him shepherd over all His flock, both lambs and sheep, in His place, in place of the Good Shepherd. The Church has always understood from the beginning that this was St. Peter's place. In the lists of the Apostles, his name is always put first, and once he is expressly called *the first*. After the Ascension of Our Lord we find St. Peter taking the lead in matters of importance. Thus he suggests the election of another Apostle to take the place of the traitor Judas, and indicates the qualifications which the candidate should possess. After the descent of the Holy Ghost, Peter is the first to begin the preaching of the Gospel, and he does it, with brilliant success. To him it is made known that the time has arrived for receiving the Gentiles into the Church. The decree of the Council of Jerusalem is drawn up on the lines laid down by Peter.\*

According to the teaching of Jesus Christ it was a matter of the utmost importance to become a member of the Church. Such membership was a hidden treasure well worth all that a man possessed; it was a pearl of great price to be bought by the sacrifice of all else.† As He imposed an obligation on His Apostles to preach the Kingdom of God, so He imposed on all who heard them the obligation of

\* Acts i. 15; ii. 14; x. 9 ff; xv. 28.

† Matt. xiii. 44-46.



entering the Church through the necessary qualifications of faith and baptism.\*

The sketch which I have given of the Church as it came from the hands of Jesus Christ shows that in all essentials it is the same institution as the Catholic Church of to-day. The mustard seed has grown, but the tree which we contemplate is its legitimate development. Birds in flocks rest among its branches, but they do not change the nature of the tree. The Catholic Church uses Greek philosophy, she finds its language and dialectic useful in the exposition of Christian doctrine, but she distinguishes with care between the deposit and Greek thought. She heeds the warning of St. Paul. However, she knows that reason does not contradict faith, that all truth comes from God, and she claims natural truth as her own even if she finds it in the philosophy of the Stoics. Although she was always conscious of possessing independent legislative authority, she borrowed without scruple many wise enactments, and the forms, method, and procedure of Roman law. In essentials her organization is the work of Christ, but in developing it she adopted without hesitation certain features of the Roman imperial system. She took over the arts and sciences of the civilization in which she moved, and even borrowed some of the furniture of Greek and Roman religion. Witness the Pantheon, the title Pontifex Maximus, and the word

\* Mark xvi. 16.

“mysteries” for the sacraments. Some of her festivals, perhaps, were instituted to oust those of paganism. All this may be admitted, as has been done by ecclesiastical writers from the beginning, but the faith and institutions of Jesus Christ are not changed by such things.

One of the chief reasons why Christ founded the Church was that it might bear witness to Himself: “You shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth.”\* He had chosen the Apostles for this purpose: they were to be witnesses to His teaching, to His resurrection from the dead, to His divinity. For this purpose He made them His intimate friends, they lived with Him, heard His teaching, saw His miracles, learned to know Him and to love Him. They knew Whom they had believed. They knew the meaning of His actions and words, or if they failed sometimes to do so, they questioned Him and were instructed by Him in the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. They heard Him say that He was the Lord of the Sabbath; they heard Him approve the faith of St. Peter when he confessed that He was the Son of the living God; they heard Him tell the Jews that He and the Father were one, and Philip that one who saw Him saw the Father; they heard Him forgive sins, and saw that the Jews were allowed by Him, without being corrected, to

\* Acts i. 8.

infer that He claimed to be God, for who can forgive sins but God alone? They quite understood why He practised a certain reticence about His divinity, His open claim to it was the immediate cause of His death, and this would have happened much earlier if it had not been for His reticence. When His hour was come, and when He was solemnly adjured by the High Priest to tell the Court whether He was the Son of God, He answered plainly and simply, "I am," and in consequence He was condemned to death for blasphemy, because He confessed that He was God. After an act of unbelief, St. Thomas was convinced of the reality of the resurrection by Our Lord accepting the conditions laid down by him, and then he confessed Him to be His Lord and His God. And in the faith of the Apostles, Jesus was God, not merely a god, a Hercules, or a deified Cæsar. He was "the Author of life," "the Lord of all," "over all things God blessed for evermore," "all things were created by Him and in Him," "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead," He is "our God and Saviour Jesus Christ," He is "the first and the last, living for ever and ever, and He has the keys of death and of hell."

That was what the Apostles believed about Jesus Christ; they had learnt it from Him, and by His command they transmitted it to all members of His Church. It is a faith abundantly justified by the wonderful history of the Jewish people, by the Old

and New Testaments, by the life, teaching and miracles of Our Lord, by the history of His Church, and by the experience of every true follower of Him. These are things which are unique in the history of religion; they prevent Christianity from being classed with other religions—these are man-made, while Christianity alone is divine.

## CHAPTER X

### THE PASSION, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

THE pagan mysteries of Demeter, Attis, and Osiris represented the annual decay of vegetation in the winter and its coming to new life and vigour in the springtime. In describing what is known of such mysteries, writers on comparative religion frequently use language borrowed from Christianity. They speak, for example, of the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Attis or Osiris, and they more than suggest that what they describe furnishes a parallel with Christian teaching. The best answer to such insinuations is to examine the facts in detail and in the concrete. We will here try to understand the Christian teaching on the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ.

The two disciples, as they went to Emmaus on the day of the Resurrection, were disappointed and sad. "We hoped," they said, "that it was he that should have redeemed Israel." They had no idea that He had redeemed Israel and the whole world. Their idea of the redemption was evidently quite different

from what had been accomplished. On the day of the Resurrection their idea of the Redeemer was still almost the same as that of the Jews of their time. They expected a Messiah who would fulfil in a worldly and temporal sense the glowing prophecies of a triumphant conqueror which abound in the Old Testament. "And he shall rule from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. . . . And all kings of the earth shall adore him; all nations shall serve him."\*

"For a child is born to us and a son is given to us, and the government is upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace. His empire shall be multiplied, and there shall be no end of peace; he shall sit upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom; to establish it and to strengthen it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth and forever; the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."†

With a human weakness which is only too common the Jews allowed their minds to be distracted by passages like these from the other side of the picture, which foretold shame and suffering, instead of glory and triumph. "Let us see then if his words be true, and let us prove what shall happen to him, and we shall know what his end shall be. For if he be the true Son of God, he will defend him, and will deliver

\* Ps. lxxi. 8, 11.

† Is. ix. 6, 7.



him from the hands of his enemies. Let us examine him by outrages and tortures, that we may know his meekness, and try his patience. Let us condemn him to a most shameful death; for there shall be respect had unto him by his words.”\*

The prophet who paints the glories of the Messiah in the most gorgeous colours is the one who paints His disgrace and sufferings in the blackest hues. “There is no beauty in him, nor comeliness; and we have seen him, and there was no sightliness, that we should be desirous of him; despised and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity; and his look was as it were hidden and despised. Whereupon we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows, and we have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our iniquities; he was bruised for our sins. The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and by his bruises we are healed.”†

These apparently contradictory aspects of the Messiah and His work did not cease with the Old Testament. Gabriel announced to Mary: “He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the most High. And the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father; and he shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever. And of his kingdom there shall be no end.”‡ Holy Simeon said his *Nunc*

\* Wisd. ii. 17, 20. † Is. liii. 2, 5. ‡ Luke i. 32, 33.

*dimittis* to God: "Because my eyes have seen thy salvation, a light to the revelation of the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel."\*

And yet his words to Mary were ominous: "Behold this child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted, and thy own soul a sword shall pierce." The angel told St. Joseph that the name Jesus meant that He was to save His people from their sins; it did not mean that He was to save the Jews from the domination of the Romans. All the circumstances which accompanied His birth and infancy precluded the idea of earthly glory and power.

And yet the minds even of the Apostles were filled with ideas of earthly glory and power to the very end. Our Lord saw this and strove gradually and gently to correct it. It was one of the most difficult points in the training of the Apostles. Very early in His public ministry He began to make veiled allusions to His Passion and death. After He had driven the buyers and sellers out of the Temple for the first time the Jews asked Him for a sign, a proof of His authority to act in such a manner. "Destroy this temple," answered Our Lord, "and in three days I will raise it up."† The Jews understood Him to speak of the Temple built by Herod. "But He spoke of the temple of His body," says the Evangelist. In His instruction given by night to Nicodemus

\* Luke ii. 30.

† John ii. 19.

He said: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting."\* After St. Peter's profession of faith in His divinity in the name of the Apostles, "from that time," says the Evangelist, "Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the ancients and scribes and chief priests, and be put to death and the third day rise again."† St. Peter was shocked, and as he had just been promised the primacy in the Church he took it upon himself to rebuke Our Lord, saying: "Lord, be it far from thee, this shall not be unto thee." He received in reply one of the sharpest reprimands ever given by his Master: "Get behind me, Satan; thou art a scandal unto me, because thou savourest not the things that are of God, but the things that are of men." On other occasions Our Lord alluded to His approaching Passion, Death, and Resurrection, and more especially when He was going up to Jerusalem for the last time. When He was still some miles from the city, "Jesus took unto Him the twelve and said to them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of man. For He shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged and spit upon. And after they have scourged Him, they will

\* John iii. 14.

† Matt. xvi. 21.

put Him to death. And the third day He shall rise again.”\* But, adds the Evangelist, “they understood none of these things, and this word was hid from them,” and that, too, on the very eve of the Passion. Not until after the Resurrection did they begin to understand, and the word of the Cross, the lesson of suffering, self-sacrifice, and self-denial became plain to them. Even then it required Our Lord Himself to make the difficult lesson comprehensible. “O foolish and slow of heart to believe in all things which the prophets have spoken. Ought not [was it not necessary for] Christ to have suffered these things and so to enter into His glory?”†

Henceforth the divine plan of redemption became clear and the prophecies concerning a suffering and triumphant Messiah fell into their right perspective. Jesus was to be our Saviour through His Passion and death, and with His Resurrection from the dead He was to begin His reign of glory. “He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted Him and hath given Him a name which is above all names; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things that are in heaven, on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father.”‡

Henceforth Christ crucified was to be the burden

\* Luke xviii. 31.

† Luke xxiv. 25.

‡ Phil. ii. 8.

of Christian preaching, "a stumbling block to the Jews and to the unbelieving Gentiles foolishness: but unto them that are called" in every age "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."\*

The doctrine of the Cross may be misunderstood and misrepresented. It was grossly misrepresented by Calvin, and modern unbelievers make use of his misrepresentation in order to discredit Christianity and make it appear repulsive to common sentiments of humanity. Calvin asserted that God was angry with Christ on our account, that God took vengeance on Him for our sins, and made Him suffer the torments of hell because of our iniquities. In this sense he understood the descent of Our Lord into hell, and the words of Isaias: "For the wickedness of my people I have struck him."†

Calvin's doctrine is one of vicarious punishment of Christ rather than vicarious satisfaction by Christ for our sins. If we would understand anything of these mysteries we must try to look at them from the standpoint of God.

God lives in eternity, not in time. From all eternity the whole course of man's history on earth has been clearly present to Him. Before He created Him He knew that great numbers would abuse the greatest of His gifts, the gift of freedom. He foresaw that great numbers would choose rather to submit to the tyranny of their passions than to obey

\* 1 Cor. i. 23.

† Is. liii. 8.

His will. To bring the matter clearly before our minds we may make use of a device which St. Ignatius uses in his meditation on the Incarnation. We may represent to ourselves the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity holding council together as to what should be done to save mankind. The second Person of the Blessed Trinity, in His infinite love for man, the work of His hands, offers to take man's nature upon Himself and live man's life on earth in order to teach him by example and by word how he ought to live. "I see clearly," says God the Father, "that if You do that, the world will turn against You. It will not endure the truth, it will hate holiness, and I foresee that it will put You to a shameful death." The Son answers, "I am ready for that, I will offer Myself as a sacrifice for the truth, and I am ready to die that they may live. If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all things to Myself. If anything can save them and gain their love the Cross will do it. It will teach them as nothing else can the malice of sin. It will give them an example of self-sacrifice carried to its utmost limits and help them to overcome their ingrained self-love. It will help them to appreciate the manliness of patience and meekness, so necessary a lesson to beings constituted as man is." The other two divine Persons look upon the Son with boundless admiration and love as He unfolds His plan of self-sacrifice for the salvation of men. When He has finished, "So be it," says the



Almighty Father; "that is Our supreme command." "This commandment have I received of my Father," said Our Lord.\*

Immediately before using those words He had said: "No one taketh [my life] away from me; but I lay it down of myself. And I have power to lay it down; and I have power to take it up again."

The chief points may perhaps be made more clear by a short analogue.

During the Great War a young man was called up for the army. Before going to the front he went to see his mother, who loved him dearly. "Mother," he said, "I do not much like this business, I feel a presentiment that I shall be killed and that I shall never see you again. But the cause is a good one. I am glad to die in it. I offer my life as a sacrifice for my country." His mother's eyes filled with tears; she kissed him tenderly as she murmured, "My own noble-hearted son."

If we look at the Atonement of our Saviour in that way, there is no inkling in it of vicarious punishment, we appreciate the meaning of St. Paul when he says that it is the power of God and the wisdom of God, and we may add, the infinite love and goodness of God.

The words of Isaiah: "For the wickedness of my people have I struck him," are easily interpreted, like many other similar Biblical expressions. God is

\* John x. 18.

said to do what He permits. For His own wise ends He permits evil, but He does not do evil. Passages such as Isaias xlv. 7, and Ecclesiasticus xi. 14, are explained in the same way. In much the same way those words of St. Paul are to be interpreted: "He that spared not even his own Son, but delivered Him up for us."\*

\* Rom. viii. 32.

## CHAPTER XI

### PROGRESS

THE world, we are told, is ruled by ideas, and among all the ideas which rule the modern world, the most potent is that of Progress. Anyone who does not believe in Progress is a reactionary and may be set aside—he does not count. Professor Bury, in his inquiry into the origin and growth of the Idea of Progress, tells us that the idea is quite modern. It was first clearly and definitely formulated by the Abbé de Saint-Pierre in 1737. Obviously Professor Bury takes the word Progress in a special sense. According to him it means that civilization has moved, is moving, and is destined to move in a desirable direction. For most people this desirable direction means a condition of society in which all the inhabitants of the earth would enjoy a perfectly happy existence. It is based on an interpretation of history which regards men as slowly advancing in a definite and desirable direction, and infers that this advance will continue indefinitely. It implies that a condition of general happiness will ultimately be enjoyed here on earth which will justify the whole

process of civilization. It also implies that the process must be a necessary outcome of the psychical and social nature of man; "it must not be at the mercy of any external will; otherwise there would be no guarantee of its continuance and its issue, and the idea of Progress would lapse into the idea of Providence."\* During the Middle Ages the idea of a life beyond the grave was in control, and the events of this life were referred to the next. The idea of Progress is incompatible with that of Providence and with the idea that man's perfect happiness must only be looked for in the life to come.

Professor Bury claims that the idea of Progress understood in this sense had its origin and owes its development to Rationalists, and the claim may be readily admitted. He also gives credit for perspicacity to the Holy See, which condemned it in the Syllabus of Errors issued in 1864.

Professor Bury's belief in Progress is very chastened, it has nothing of the fervour of Victor Hugo's *La Légende des Siècles*, or even of Tennyson's first *Locksley Hall*. He sees quite plainly that in order to be sure of Progress we should have to know the term towards which the world is moving, and that we cannot know. He seems also to have his doubts about the requisite perfectibility of human nature, another necessary element in the problem. In fact, the idea of Progress cannot be proved. "It is true

\* *The Idea of Progress*, p. 5.

or false, but it cannot be proved to be either true or false. Belief in it is an act of faith," he says.\*

Dean Inge is not enamoured of recent progress and is not dazzled by it. He holds with Disraeli that the nineteenth century mistook comfort for civilization. It cannot be denied that great advance was made in the knowledge of the physical world and in the application of that knowledge to procure the material comforts of life. It was the great acquisitive century, an age in which the nation increased wonderfully in wealth, numbers, and power. But those things do not and did not bring with them content and happiness. The mould in which the Victorian age was cast is broken. There is no law of Progress. We see now that the gains of last century were made at too dear a rate, and even that they are of doubtful value.

"We have been driven to the conclusion that neither science nor history gives us any warrant for believing that humanity has advanced, except by accumulating knowledge and experience, and the instruments of living. The value of these accumulations is not beyond dispute. Attacks upon civilization have been frequent, from Crates, Pherecrates, Antisthenes, and Lucretius in antiquity, to Rousseau, Walt Whitman, Thoreau, Ruskin, Morris, and Edward Carpenter in modern times. I cannot myself agree with these extremists. I believe that the accumulated experience of mankind, and his

\* *Op. cit.*, p. 4.

wonderful discoveries, are of great value. I only point out that they do not constitute real progress in human nature itself, and that in the absence of any real progress these gains are external, precarious, and liable to be turned to our own destruction, as new discoveries in chemistry may easily be.”\*

Disillusion with regard to the modern dogma of progress is not entirely a growth of the twentieth century. It made its appearance before the end of the nineteenth century, the age which saw it attain the heyday of its splendour and popularity. As the great national poet had, as a young man, voiced the hopes and feelings of the people while belief in the doctrine was general and ardent, so in his second *Locksley Hall* Tennyson voiced their disillusionment and disappointment.

Gone the cry of “Forward, Forward,” lost within a growing gloom;

Lost, or only heard in silence, from the silence of a tomb.

Half the marvels of my morning, triumphs over time and space,  
Staled by frequency, shrunk by usage into commonest common-  
place !

“Forward” rang the voices then, and of the many mine was one.

Let us hush this cry of “Forward,” till ten thousand years  
have gone.

Have we grown at last beyond the passions of the primal clan ?  
“Kill your enemy, for you hate him;” still, your enemy was  
man.

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\* W. R. Inge, the Romanes Lecture, 1920.



Have we sunk below them ? peasants maim the helpless horse,  
and drive

Innocent cattle under thatch, and burn the kindlier brutes alive.

Yonder lies our young sea-village—Art and Grace are less and  
less;

Science grows and Beauty dwindles—roofs of slated hideous-  
ness !

Poor old Heraldry ! poor old History ! poor old Poetry, passing  
hence,

In the common deluge drowning old Political Common-sense !

Disillusion and discontent grew apace. Labour revolted and the Great War crashed down on a terrified world. In horror men saw peoples who prided themselves on their culture plunge themselves into the orgy of blood, hate, lust, and plunder with a zest which would have horrified the barbarous hordes of Attila or Jenghiz Khan.

We do not fully understand what has happened yet. Can we do anything to throw light on the mystery ?

The explanation is that Christendom has ceased to be Christian, it has abandoned the principles on which it was founded and reared. One of the proofs of this assertion may be derived from the distortion of the idea of Progress of which the Rationalists have been guilty. Like Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, Progress in a well-defined sense is an essential element of the Christian religion. The Catholic Church fostered and guided Progress for fifteen hundred years, with occasional set-backs, but on the whole with conspicuous success. Then came

the breaking up of Christendom at the time of the Reformation, Christian civilization was no longer under the guidance of the Church, and many of the humanists began to look for guidance elsewhere. Many looked and still look to pagan Greece and Rome. Some Rationalists, without reason, as Professor Bury has shown, pointed to an unknown and far-distant future, when the fondest hopes of humanity were at last to be realized. They imported into the old Christian doctrine of Progress implications of their own. Man was to attain supreme happiness here on earth and without any help from Providence. By those implications they distorted the idea of Progress. Christianity had taught and teaches that with the help of God man may make true Progress indefinitely in this world, and that then he may leap forward to perfect and unchanging happiness in life everlasting. All this has been distorted by Rationalism, the world has followed it, and now finds to its dismay that it has been guided to Chaos.

My main purpose here is to show that Christianity has a doctrine of Progress, and what it implies.

Christianity has a clear and definite scale of values, and it is different from that of the pagan Greeks and Romans and from that of modern Rationalists. Taught by Jesus Christ, the Catholic Church prizes literature, art, science, knowledge of all kinds. Some prejudiced people have denied this, but the history of two thousand years proves that it is true.

Unprejudiced people now commonly recognize the fact.\* Still, according to the teaching of Jesus Christ, there are things of greater value than literature, art, science, and knowledge. Jesus Christ did not come to save the world by literature, art, science, and knowledge. He came to save it from its sins; by His preaching He taught people how to avoid sin, how to lead good lives, and how to be truly happy by that means. The Catholic Church has learnt the doctrine which she teaches, and has taken her scale of values from Jesus Christ. She knows that she was founded for the sanctification and salvation of souls, and she teaches that man's good and true happiness can be attained in no other way than by leading a good life. Moral, ethical goodness is the main thing, all else is comparatively of little moment. Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all other things that you need shall be added unto you. What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul? Christianity is penetrated with the truth and importance of that teaching of the Master. If the world is to be saved it must be saved, not by literature, art, science, knowledge, and the subduing of the forces of nature to serve man's comfort and convenience. It can only be saved by good, moral living. If history teaches anything it teaches that lesson. All the civilizations that the world has seen have grown until they reached a

\* *Mediæval Contributions to Modern Civilization*, 1921.

certain stage of prosperity and wealth. Then decay has set in, not because knowledge dwindled, but because morals became corrupt. Ancient observers were quite conscious of this. It was at the root of all the pessimism of the ancient world. It is summed up in the famous lines of Horace, which are a brief compendium of the history of the world without Christ: "What do the ravages of time not injure? Our parents' age, worse than our grandsires', brought forth us still worse, and destined soon to bear an offspring yet more wicked."

It was from that law of corruption and degeneracy that Christ wished to save the world. For that purpose He founded His Church. "You are the salt of the earth," He said, and your function is to preserve it from corruption. "You are the light of the world," and it is your duty to show where the hope of happiness lies.

Human nature, without the teaching of Christ and without the grace of Christ, infallibly tends to degeneracy and decay. But if it follows that teaching and makes use of that grace a vista is opened up of indefinite advancement and progress.

This is an axiom of Christian moral teaching. In his well-known *Treatise on the Practice of Christian and Religious Perfection*, first published in 1609, Alphonsus Rodriguez devotes a chapter to this subject.\* He tells us that it is a maxim received by

\* *Treatise*, i. vi.

all holy men that we certainly go back if we do not advance. He says he will demonstrate its truth so that it may be a powerful incentive to make progress daily in perfection. He then quotes St. Augustine, St. Gregory, St. John Chrysostom, St. Leo, and St. Bernard, who all agree that not to make progress in virtue is to go back. Cassian, he says, teaches the same and confirms his doctrine by an apposite example. He says that one who is trying to lead a good life is like a man who is rowing against the stream. His passions are ever against him, and unless he overcomes them he cannot hope to succeed, any more than a man who is rowing against the stream can prevent being carried downstream if he stops rowing.

But Christian teachers did not base their teaching merely on experience and common sense. They chiefly appealed to the example and teaching of Jesus Christ. It is written of Jesus Christ that He advanced, made progress, in wisdom and in grace, as He advanced in age. St. John Damascene and St. Cyril say that this is written of Him for our instruction. For he that does not advance goes back, he that does not make progress degenerates. Furthermore, Christ imposed a precept on all His followers, Be you perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. For Christians there can be no doubt about human perfectibility and the possibility of making progress. Christ commanded it, and therefore it is possible.

There is no chance of equalling the infinite perfection of God in degree, but Christ commanded us to practise charity and all moral virtues so that we may be like God, and ever strive to make ourselves more closely like to Him. That is the ideal of Christian moral perfection; we can never attain it completely in this world, but we can always get closer to it with the help of God's grace. It is the spur at the root of Christianity ever urging us on to make new and greater progress.\*

If the individuals who compose a society make constant moral progress, then social progress is secured. This will be especially the case where among the chief moral virtues are inculcated the love of one's neighbour and the generous conquering of selfishness. How real and powerful has been the influence of these ideas on the social progress of the past two thousand years is shown by the gradual abolition of slavery. The social effect of Christian doctrine and practice is necessarily elevating and progressive, and this effect was foreseen and intended by Jesus Christ. The whole mass of mankind was gradually to be leavened by the beneficent action of the Church.

The Catholic Church, then, has a clear and definite doctrine of Progress. Her mission is to make mankind happy even here on earth, and she strives to do this by trying to make them better. She by no

\* See Cornelius à Lapide, in Matt. v. 48.



means despises literature, art, science, and knowledge, but she knows human nature too well to imagine that men can be made contented and happy by those means. She has always used those means as helps towards the attainment of her end, but she relies chiefly on inducing men to lead good lives. There can be no doubt but that she is right. The unrest and discontent of the modern world, which has been pursuing other ideals, every day prove more clearly that she is right. We see that unless moral progress keeps pace with man's conquest of nature, selfishness, greed, love of pleasure, pride, and all his evil passions will be armed with terrible weapons for the destruction of man and of human society. The Great War should at least have made that clear. Constant social strife enforces the same lesson.

## CHAPTER XII

### LIBERTY, EQUALITY, AND FRATERNITY

**F**OR more than a hundred years these words have been the rallying cry of modern democracy. The ideas expressed by them are Christian in origin, but their meaning has been somewhat changed in the course of recent history. It will be worth while briefly to indicate those changes; it will help us to see more clearly the direction in which things have been moving.

The Catholic Church prizes liberty very highly and prays for it constantly. She values it as the most excellent of all the gifts of God. For it is by means of liberty that man is the master of his own actions, he is not a slave of destiny or a mere creature of circumstance. His actions are not determined by antecedent conditions, he can shape them as he chooses. However, man did not make himself, he was created by God out of nothing, and by the necessity of his nature he belongs to God Who made Him. His nature is rational, and he is capable of knowing the truth. Reason tells him that there is a right and a wrong in human actions. His rational

nature teaches him that he should do what is right. He has the physical capacity to choose what is wrong, but he knows that reason should be his guide and that in all his actions he should choose what is right. What is right will be the law of his actions; he *ought* ever to pursue what is right; to this his rational nature urges him, and as his Creator and Lord wished him to act in accordance with the nature which He had given him, man is *obliged* so to act. He is under an obligation, under a natural law, to do what is right and to avoid what is wrong. Although he can do wrong physically if he chooses, to his own loss and ultimate destruction, yet right reason and the law of God forbid him to indulge in such criminal folly. He has the rational and moral liberty to do right, there is no such thing as rational and moral liberty to do wrong. Man, then, has the liberty to do right, he has not and he cannot have the liberty to do wrong. That is a most important principle which should be kept constantly in mind while considering the matter with which we are dealing.

Human liberty means freedom to do what is right. What is right is ultimately a question as to what is true, and so it is the truth which makes us free, as Christ our Lord said.\*

Obedience to lawful authority and to just laws is a necessary condition of personal liberty. The anarchist who spurns lawful authority and refuses to

\* John viii. 32.

obey just laws does not thereby enjoy liberty, he indulges in licence.

These principles concerning human liberty are deduced from right reason, and they are of universal validity whether we consider man individually or as living with others in society. Man lives in society, urged thereto by the imperious dictates of his nature, by the desire to obtain protection for life and property, and by the wish to increase his well-being. Society makes rules and laws to secure these objects. It prohibits and punishes murder and robbery. But civil law does not make murder and robbery wrong, they were wrong before society came into existence. The natural law forbids man to take the life or the property of his fellow-man. Civil society adds a sanction to those laws of nature, but it does not make the laws themselves. However, there are many departments of civil life where regulations for the common good are necessary, but where nature herself lays down no definite and precise laws. Here the civil authority or the State steps in and supplies the defect. When the State has made such laws for the common good, they become rules of conduct which the citizens are bound to observe. Their liberty is not infringed, but safeguarded by them, they are led by them to what is right and deterred from what is wrong.

We cannot do better than state the conclusion of the foregoing argument in the words of Pope Leo XIII.:

“ From this it is manifest that the eternal law of God is the sole standard and rule of human liberty, not only in each individual man, but also in the community and civil society which men form when united. Therefore, the true liberty of human society does not consist in every man doing what he pleases, for this would simply end in turmoil and confusion, and bring on the overthrow of the State; but rather in this, that through the injunctions of the civil law all may more easily conform to the prescriptions of the eternal law. Likewise, the liberty of those who are in authority does not consist in the power to lay unreasonable and capricious commands upon their subjects, which would equally be criminal and would lead to the ruin of the commonwealth; but the binding force of human laws is in this, that they are to be regarded as applications of the eternal law, and incapable of sanctioning anything which is not contained in the eternal law as in the principle of all law. . . . These precepts of the truest and highest teaching, made known to us by the light of reason itself, the Church, instructed by the example and doctrine of her divine Founder, has ever propagated and asserted; for she has ever made them the measure of her office and of her teaching to the Christian nations.”\*

Such were the great guiding principles concerning human liberty which held sway during the ages of faith. The governed were taught that it was their

\* Encyclical Letter on Human Liberty, June 20, 1888.

duty to reverence and yield willing obedience to lawful authority. Those in authority were admonished that power was given to them not to be used for selfish ends, but for the common good of all; that they must not use it unreasonably or tyrannically; and that they would have to render an account of their use of it to the supreme Lord of all. The independence of the Church within her own sphere was a powerful check on the State, and in cases of conflict between the people and the crown she was generally found on the side of the people.

In its nicely balanced equipoise between duties and rights the theory was almost perfect, as Signor Ferrero remarks.\* But for its efficacy and stability, as the same writer adds, it required the permanence of the religious beliefs of Christendom. Those religious beliefs sustained a rude shock in many minds at the time of the Protestant Reformation. The fundamental principle of religious authority was directly attacked, but authority in religion was soon seen to involve authority in morality, in social and domestic life and even in politics and economics. When external authority in religion was denied and rejected, the private judgment of the individual was substituted in its place. The private opinion of each individual became for him the final court of appeal not only in matters of faith, but in morals, in social and domestic life, and in politics and economics.

\* *The Triumph of Christianity*, p. 183.



This led necessarily to a wider conception of liberty. Truth guaranteed by the public teaching of the Church had hitherto been the standard of liberty for the Christian; henceforth private opinion became the standard for those who rejected the authority of the Church. A man was to be guided as to what he might or might not do by his own judgment, he was free to follow his conscience, he had the liberty to do what seemed good in his own eyes—in fact, he might do as he pleased, if he allowed the same liberty to others.

The rationalist movement put human reason in the place not only of the Church, but of God Himself, and led to further development in the direction of licence. The French Revolution solemnly adopted rationalistic principles as the basis of its policy and statesmanship. It will be well to quote here a few headings concerning liberty from the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* issued in 1789 :

“ I. Men are born and continue free.

“ II. The end of every political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man. Those rights are liberty, security, and resistance to oppression.

“ IV. Liberty consists in the power of doing whatever does not injure another.

“ V. The law ought to prohibit only actions hurtful to society. What is not prohibited by the law should

not be hindered, and no one can be constrained to do what it does not order.

“ VI. The law is the expression of the general will.

“ X. No one ought to be molested on account of his opinions, not even on account of his religious opinions, provided their manifestation does not disturb the public order established by the law.

“ XI. The unrestrained communication of thoughts and opinions is one of the most precious rights of man. Every citizen, therefore, may speak, write, and print freely provided he is responsible for the abuse of this liberty, in cases determined by the law.”

We cannot fail to notice that the concept of liberty as defined in these Principles has undergone a radical change. In Christian thought liberty is a moral and religious idea; in the Principles of 1789 it is legal and secularist. According to Christian teaching man has the liberty to do what is right; according to the Principles of 1789 he has the liberty to do whatever is not prohibited by law, and law should only prohibit what is hurtful to society. The law depends on the general will of the people and is enacted and changed by the people's representatives. More significant still is the changed relation of liberty to thought. In Christian teaching it is the truth which makes us free; truth has rights, falsehood and error have no rights. The Principles give the privileges of truth to opinion. A man must not be molested on account of his opinions, not even on

account of his religious opinions; a man may think as he pleases, and one of his most precious rights is the right to disseminate his opinions among others by speech, writing, or printing, provided that he does not contravene the law. Our own day has witnessed the inevitable sequel to these ideas. There is no kind of rash enterprise which they will not justify. A few half-educated and hot-headed young men adopt the rationalistic idea of indefinite and indubitable progress towards an earthly millennium. They want to see it brought about in their own day. As necessary steps towards this end they foster popular discontent with the present social order. That must be changed at all costs. They have not made up their minds as to what is to be put in its place. There are several schemes competing for the mastery. State Socialism, Syndicalism, Collectivism, Guild Socialism, Communism. The experiments which have been made and a little knowledge of human nature show that none of these schemes can succeed. Undeterred by these obvious considerations, and by the fact that the great majority of people know nothing and care nothing about any of their schemes, the passionate few pursue their object. They are bent on precipitating a revolution, and after that they themselves will establish a dictatorship of the proletariat in order to educate the masses up to the requirements of the new earthly paradise. The masses will have to be forced to be free. It is always

found that false ideas commit suicide in the end. But, unfortunately, much evil is often done by the working out of the process.

Equality among men is an idea of Christian origin. In the ancient world the great majority of men were slaves. The slave was the chattel, the living instrument, the absolute property of his master. The greatest philosophers of antiquity justified the institution of slavery on the ground that some men were naturally slaves: they were of a nature inferior to that of freemen. What the body of man is to the mind, what the lower animal is to man, that the slave is to him who is free. The highest function of the slave is the obedient expenditure of his strength so as to render a noble life possible for his master. Christianity cut at the root of such notions as these. It taught that all men have the same origin in God and the same destiny. All had been redeemed by Christ, and all were called to be saved. In the Church there was neither Gentile nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ was all in all. The slave not only had the same human nature as his master, but he was to be regarded as a "most dear brother both in the flesh and in the Lord." It might easily happen, and in fact did frequently happen, that on Christian principles the Christian master was forced to confess that his slave was much superior to himself. On Christian principles it did not very much matter what

position one held in the body corporate or in society. True Christians were not to be envious of the positions which others occupied. Each one had his place and function, all were useful and necessary in their degree. They were to be zealous for the better gifts, all jealousy was to be consumed in the fire of divine charity. "Follow after charity; be zealous for spiritual gifts."\*

With the abandonment of Christianity all this has fallen to the ground. The idea of equality has been retained, but it has been distorted. In spite of obvious facts the French Revolution solemnly announced that all men are born equal, and that all count as equals in the body politic. Men are obviously unequal in size, strength, bodily health, mental capacity. It is desirable that men should be equal before the law, which should be no respecter of persons. But that all men have equal rights or that they can enjoy equal conditions in civilized society, is palpably absurd and impossible. In an organized body there must necessarily be some in a higher position and others in a lower, and all have their respective and different rights. It is desirable that all should have opportunities to make the best of themselves for their own sakes and for the good of society. The Catholic Church has ever furnished the best example of the career open to talent. But that all should claim equality of opportunity as a

\* 1 Cor. xiv. 1.

right is a demand for what is impossible and undesirable. Men are not only very unequal in the natural and spiritual gifts of body and soul, but they necessarily differ widely in the advantages and disadvantages conferred on them by their parents and early surroundings. Men and women differ indefinitely in their power of influencing and educating children, and it is clearly impossible for all to have the benefits which only the best homes and the best schools confer. So that equality of opportunity in any real sense is an impossibility. To attempt to enforce it would lead to serious interference with liberty, and would be ruinous to any prospect of progress.

Fraternity is the third watchword of modern revolutionaries, but their idea of it is better expressed by citizen or comrade, for their treatment of capitalists and aliens is anything but brotherly. It is frequently asserted, especially by modern writers on comparative religion, that the Stoics were the first to teach the brotherhood of men; and that St. Paul and other Christian teachers derived the idea from them. It is true that the Stoics taught the unity of the human race, but this was only a consequence of their Pantheism. According to Stoic doctrine God was the supreme Reason pervading the universe, of which each human being had a particle as his share. In that sense, as Aratus, quoted by St. Paul, expressed it, *We are also his (Zeus') offspring*. But St. Paul did



not borrow his doctrine of the brotherhood of men from Stoicism. His idea of God was quite different from that of the Stoics. In the same discourse in which he quoted from Aratus he announced to the Athenians the God Who hitherto had been unknown to them. The Athenians were well acquainted with the god of the Stoics and with their doctrine of the unity of the human race which was derived from it. St. Paul preached *One God and Father of all, Who is above all*.\* When he wrote these words to the Ephesians St. Paul without doubt had in mind the words of Malachias—"Have we not all one Father? Hath not God created us? Why then doth every one of us despise his brother, violating the covenant of our Fathers?"† The Christian doctrine of the brotherhood of all men is founded on the biblical doctrine of the creation by God of the common ancestor of all mankind.

There is also a special brotherhood of all Christians taught by Jesus Christ and faithfully echoed by St. Paul and the other Apostles. Stretching forth His hand towards His disciples, He said: "Behold my mother and my brethren."‡ And on another occasion He said: "Go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and to your Father."§ St. Paul and St. John frequently develop this Christian sonship of God, by which all Christians

\* Eph. iv. 6.

† Mal. ii. 10.

‡ Matt. xii. 49.

§ John xx. 17.

are adopted sons of God, brethren of Jesus Christ, and brothers among themselves. This adoption takes place by means of baptism. There is no need to insist further on the matter here, it abundantly justifies the language of Leo XIII.: "The impartiality of law and the true brotherhood of man were first asserted by Jesus Christ, and His Apostles re-echoed His voice when they declared that in future there was to be neither Jew nor Gentile, neither barbarian nor Scythian, but all were brothers in Christ."\*

\* Encyclical Letter on Human Liberty.

## CHAPTER XIII

### PATRIOTISM

**I**S patriotism a virtue? In other words, is it a good and praiseworthy thing to have a special love for our own country, and is it one of the duties of every good man?

Many people have denied it. Ruskin said that patriotism is an absurd prejudice founded on an extended selfishness. Mr. Havelock Ellis admits that it is a virtue among barbarians. Christians are bidden to conduct themselves in this life as strangers and pilgrims, whose country is not in this world. The true Christian is taught to look on himself as being in exile in this vale of tears and to yearn for his true fatherland in heaven. Does this not show that, like Communists and cosmopolitan Jews, Christians have no country to which they owe any special obligation? As there is a red International of Communists, and a yellow International of high financiers, so there would seem to be a black International formed by the Catholic Church. Let us see if we can make the Catholic doctrine of patriotism clear.

By patriotism we mean a special love of preference for the country wherein our ancestors dwelt and which we, their descendants, possess. The members of a nomad tribe which wanders from place to place are incapable of patriotism. But as soon as the tribe settles down in a territory and makes its home there then patriotism makes its appearance. The members of the tribe transfer the natural love which they entertained for their ancestors, parents, and relatives to the country where they lived and which they made their home. Of the reality and strength of the sentiment and of its deep roots in human nature there can be no doubt. It will be well to take a few familiar examples, drawn from various ages and nations.

Our first example is the famous speech of Pericles addressed to the people of Athens in commemoration of those who had fallen in the first year of the Peloponnesian war. He said:

“ I shall, therefore, begin first with our forefathers, since both justice and decency require we should on this occasion bestow on them an honourable remembrance. In this our country they kept themselves always firmly settled, and through their valour handed it down free to every succeeding generation. Worthy indeed of praise are they, and yet more worthy are our immediate fathers; since enlarging their own inheritance into the extensive empire which we now possess, they be-

queathed that their work of toil to us their sons. Yet even these successes we ourselves here present, we who are yet in the strength and vigour of our days, have nobly improved, and have made such provision for this our Athens that now it is all-sufficient in itself to answer every exigency of war and of peace."

He then dwells successively on the glories of ancient Athens; on its democratic form of government; its military prowess; its cultured social life; its spirit of liberality, and its culture which made Athens the school of Greece. Our next extract may be the praise of England which Shakespeare puts into the mouth of the dying John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster:

This royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle,  
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,  
This other Eden, demi-paradise;  
This fortress built by Nature for herself  
Against infection, and the hand of war;  
This happy breed of men, this little world;  
This precious stone set in the silver sea;  
Which serves it in the office of a wall,  
Or as a moat defensive to a house,  
Against the envy of less happier lands;  
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England,  
This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings  
Feared for their breed, and famous for their birth,  
Renowned for their deeds as far from home  
As is the sepulchre in stubborn Jewry  
Of the world's ransom, blessed Mary's Son;  
This land of such dear souls, this dear, dear land,  
Dear for her reputation through the world,

Is now leased out (I die pronouncing it)  
 Like to a tenement, or pelting farm;  
 England, bound in with the triumphant sea,  
 Whose rocky shore bears back the envious siege  
 Of watery Neptune, is now bound in with shame,  
 With inky blots, and rotten parchment bonds;  
 That England, that was wont to conquer others,  
 Hath made a shameful conquest of itself !  
 Ah ! would the scandal vanish with my life,  
 How happy then were my ensuing death !

Some of the tender lines addressed to Ireland by  
 James Clarence Mangan may come next :

Over dews, over sands,  
 Will I fly for your weal;  
 Your holy, delicate white hands  
 Shall girdle me with steel.  
 At home, in your emerald bowers,  
 From morning's dawn till e'en,  
 You'll pray for me, my flower of flowers,  
     My dark Rosaleen !  
     My own Rosaleen !  
 You'll think of me through daylight's hours,  
 My virgin flower, my flower of flowers,  
     My dark Rosaleen !

I could scale the blue air,  
 I could plough the high hills !  
 Oh, I could kneel all night in prayer  
 To heal your many ills !  
 And one beamy smile from you  
 Would float like light between  
 My toils and me, my own, my true,  
     My dark Rosaleen !  
     My own Rosaleen !  
 Would give me life and soul anew,  
 A second life, a soul anew,  
     My dark Rosaleen !



In after life and in distant climes fond recollection and imagination tinge the memory of home with rainbow colours. The quiet pathos of Goldsmith may serve to illustrate how the love of country pulls at the heartstrings of the exile:

In all my wanderings round this world of care,  
In all my griefs—and God has given my share—  
I still had hopes, my latest hours to crown,  
Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down;  
To husband out life's taper at the close,  
And keep the flame from wasting by repose.  
I still had hopes, for pride attends us still,  
Amidst the swains to show my book—learn'd skill—  
Around my fire an evening group to draw,  
And tell of all I felt, and all I saw;  
And as a hare whom hounds and horns pursue,  
Pants to the place from whence at first she flew,  
I still had hopes, my long vexations pass'd,  
Here to return—and die at home at last.

These typical extracts show that patriotism is not a thesis which requires proof. It is a fact of human nature, patent to all observers of all ages and of all nations. Doubtless there are exceptions to the general rule that men have a special love for their native land. In well-known, vigorous lines, Scott explains the chief cause of such exceptions and at the same time asserts the practical universality of the sentiment among men:

Breathes there a man with soul so dead,  
Who never to himself hath said,  
This is my own, my native land!  
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned,  
As home his footsteps he hath turned  
From wandering on a foreign strand?

If such there breathes, go, mark him well;  
For him no minstrel raptures swell;  
High though his titles, proud his name,  
Boundless his wealth, as wish can claim,  
Despite these titles, power, and pelf,  
The wretch concentrated all in self,  
Living shall forfeit fair renown,  
And, doubly dying, shall go down  
To the vile dust, from whence he sprung,  
Unwept, unhonoured, and unsung.  
O Caledonia, stern and wild,  
Meet nurse for a poetic child,  
Land of brown heath and shaggy wood,  
Land of the mountain and the flood,  
Land of my sires ! what mortal hand  
Can e'er untie the filial band  
That knits me to thy rugged strand !

There can be no doubt about the reality and universality of patriotism. Is it a blind, irrational impulse of our lower nature which should be curbed and corrected, or at least changed into a wider love for humanity in general? Or has it a rational and moral basis which requires that it should be esteemed and fostered? Is it a prejudice or is it a virtue which should be cultivated, though guarded from excess as well as from defect? Catholic teaching has no doubt about the answer to be given to such questions as these.

St. Thomas has no difficulty in showing that patriotism is a virtue. It is a virtue to pay one's debts, to give what is due to another. Such acts are prescribed by the general virtue of justice. But debts of general justice may be grounded on many

different titles and reasons. A loan must be repaid because it is right that everyone should have his own. A contract should be fulfilled because a man should be faithful to his promises. Gratitude requires that we should make some return to those who have done us a favour. We owe all that we have and are to Almighty God, and so there is a special virtue called religion which prescribes the various acts of worship which are due to God in return for all that He has done for us. After God we owe most to our parents, of whom we were born and by whom we were reared, and to our country in which we were born and reared. There is then a special virtue which prescribes the acts due to our parents and to our country for all that we owe to them. That virtue is a natural virtue like justice, of which it is a part.\* Cicero and the ancients called the virtue *pietas*.

Jesus Christ taught that He had not come to destroy the law, the Ten Commandments, but to perfect it. He did not abrogate natural obligations. And so, just as Christians are bound to show due honour, obedience, and love to their parents, so they are bound to fulfil all the obligations which they owe to their country. Accordingly, we find that St. Ambrose in his *De Officiis* adopts the teaching of Cicero on *pietas* in his work which bears the same title. And St. Thomas, too, has no scruple in borrowing his definition of *pietas* from the pagan philosopher.

\* St. Thomas, *Summa*, II., ii., q. 101, a. 3.

Jesus Christ said that He came not to destroy, but to fulfil what was true and right in the moral teaching of the ancients. His teaching not only does not abrogate what was true and right in the doctrine of the ancients about patriotism, but it perfects it. Natural reason tells us what a heavy debt we owe to our native country. As a modern authority says:

“ To the happy conditions of soil, climate, configuration, and geographical position the inhabitants of Europe owe the honour of having been the first to obtain a knowledge of the earth in its entirety, and to have remained for so long a period at the head of mankind. Historical geographers are, therefore, right when they insist upon the influence which the configuration of a country exercises upon the nations who inhabit it. The extent of tablelands, the heights of mountain ranges, the direction and volume of rivers, the vicinity of the ocean, the indentation of the coastline, the temperature of the air, the abundance or rarity of rain, and the correlation between soil, air, and water, all these are pregnant with effects, and explain much of the character and mode of life of primitive nations. They account for most of the contrasts existing between nations subject to different conditions.”\*

If we owe so much to the external features of our native land, we owe still more to the spirit, history, institutions, common ideas, sentiments, and aims of its

\* E. Reclus, *The Universal Geography*, i. 4.

people, our progenitors. Natural reason prescribes that this huge debt which each of us owes to our native land should be paid by a devoted and enlightened patriotism. Christ taught us to fulfil it and make it perfect by the law of Charity.

The first precept of Charity is that we should love God for His own sake with our whole hearts, and the second precept is that we should love our neighbour as ourselves for God's sake. This does not mean that we should love all mankind with an evenly balanced affection. All men are not equally our neighbours, nor are all men equally dear to God and equally worthy of our affection. In formulating His precept Jesus Christ made the natural love which we all have for ourselves the rule and norm of the love which He commanded us to bear towards our neighbour. We must do to others as we wish others to do to us. All men are not equally our neighbours, and we do not expect the same degree of love to be shown to us by everybody. With a general charity we are bound to love the inhabitants of China and Japan, whom we have never seen and who have few or no relations with ourselves. We are bound by a more particular obligation of charity to love our fellow countrymen, whose welfare is bound up with our own in many ways and whose help we need for the securing of a full and happy life.

Charity then, as well as justice, sanctions and enforces the duty of patriotism.

It is true that Christianity modified and limited the teaching of the ancients about patriotism. According to the ancients the love of country was absolute and supreme. Cicero, for example, says:

“When we have gone over all the relations that are in the world, and thoroughly considered the nature of each, we shall find that there is no one of greater obligation, no one that is dearer and nearer to us than that which we all of us bear to the Commonwealth. We have a tender concern and regard for our parents, for our children, our kindred, and acquaintance, but the love which we have for our native country swallows up all other loves whatsoever; for which there is no honest man but would die, if by his death he could do it any necessary service.”\*

The ancients deified their city and offered it divine worship. The individual was of small consequence, the State was everything; it domineered with absolute sway over both body and soul. Love for one's own country generally took the form of aggressive militarism. In famous lines the Roman poet tells Rome that it is her proud destiny to rule over the peoples with imperial sway, to spare those that submit, to war down those who proudly resist. Christianity modified this doctrine in many ways. It taught that supreme honour and obedience is due only to the one, true and living God, the Creator of all things and the Lord of the universe. According to pagan

\* *De Officiis*, i., c. 17.



notions the very gods and goddesses in Olympus wrangled over the rival interests of the cities entrusted to their patronage. There is no room for such ideas as these in Christianity.

Christianity teaches that the individual is immortal, whereas the State is only temporary. Moreover it withdraws the spiritual welfare of men from the authority of the State and commits it to the charge of a universal society founded by God which will last for ever. In religion and in all spiritual matters the Christian owes obedience and love to the Church; he belongs to a world-wide communion which transcends the limits of particular countries, and which will continue and attain its final development in heaven. His heavenly country should occupy his highest thoughts, desires, and aspirations. The love of his earthly country, though real and to be maintained, must of necessity take a subordinate place in his esteem and affections.

It is thus that Christianity curbs the excess and extravagance of the ancient patriotism. It sanctions and enforces the love of country with due moderation. Just as the traitor to his country was the blackest of criminals according to Cicero, and deserving of the lowest abyss of hell according to Virgil, so Dante places him in the lowest depths of his Inferno.

The Christian doctrine of patriotism is very necessary for the modern world. It provides a useful check for the dangerous views which are sometimes

voiced by such expressions as "My country right or wrong," and "Germany over all."

There are signs that the spirit of nationality will not be satisfied with asserting itself and securing self-government for the nations. Under pretext of security, of the necessity of acquiring scientific frontiers, or because it is for their good, the stronger nations will inevitably strive to impose their yoke on the weaker. In many countries the State tends to usurp the rights of the individual and needs some strong influence to keep it in check, especially as it is often backed by modern philosophical theories. On the other hand the cosmopolitan and the conscientious objector require to be taught that the love of country is not only legitimate, but obligatory on every good man. The Catholic doctrine on patriotism provides us with the golden mean between the vices of excess and defect.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### AUTHORITY AND REUNION

THE chief element in every society of men is rightly constituted authority. No society can exist without it. A mere number of men gathered together in one place is nothing but a crowd, incapable of doing anything except mischief. But when a chairman has been duly elected the crowd becomes a meeting, capable of passing resolutions and transacting business. If workmen wish to protect themselves and further their interests, they elect officials and form themselves into a union. If a number of artists wish to do the same, they elect a president and form themselves into an association. If a number of people find themselves on a desert island or in some out-of-the-way corner of the earth, they constitute a committee of public safety to look after the welfare of all.

Necessity and common sense teach this obvious lesson in the case of voluntary associations. If they are to be of any benefit to the members and are to endure they must have properly constituted

authorities with the power requisite to defend and promote the interests of the associates.

The same thing is required in natural societies. Neither the family nor the State can endure unless they are ruled and governed by a properly constituted authority. Constant confusion, disorder, and anarchy would be the result of trying to dispense with all authority in the family or in the State. The education and rearing of children, peace, security, and order, would be impossible without submission to the responsible authority. A number of men, even if they had arms, but were without any leader, would be an easy prey for their enemies.

Signor Ferrero has well said: "The principle of authority is the key to all civilization; when the political system becomes disintegrated, and falls into anarchy, civilization in its turn is rapidly broken up. . . . Each party or group which in the vagaries of that anarchy might gain possession of power for a day, would consider it had the right to remake the whole world on new principles! What utter disorder in the State, in morals, in culture, in the family, and in property, would result from such attempts, has been demonstrated to us in the case of Russia."\*

The same writer shows how Christianity revolutionized the intellectual and moral foundations of the Greco-Roman civilization and thus saved Europe.

\* *The Ruin of the Ancient Civilization*, pp. 207-209.

For the old pagan doctrine of brute force it substituted a new conception of authority resting on God.

Leo XIII. sets forth the Christian teaching on this point in his Encyclical Letter on the Christian Constitution of States, issued on November 1, 1885. Man, he says, is a social animal and cannot live as his nature requires that he should do except in the society of his fellow men. God is the author of man and of all that is natural to him. But if man is to live in society he must live subject to the lawfully constituted authority which rules over every society of men. No society can exist without such an authority. It is a necessary and natural element of all societies. Hence all lawful and public authority is from God. God has willed that it should be, and as the Lord and Master of all things He has given all public authorities the power necessary to fulfil their functions; *there is no power but from God.\** The Pope goes on to quote St. Paul and to develop his teaching. It follows from this that anyone who refuses obedience to lawful authority refuses to obey God and deserves damnation. We should all then obey lawful authority not only for fear of the temporal consequences of insubordination, but also for conscience' sake.

The Pope points out that this argument is valid for all forms of rightly constituted authority, monarchical,

\* Rom. xiii. 1.

aristocratic, democratic, or any combination or mixture of them. Provided that the authority is lawfully constituted, rules justly, and is able to fulfil its functions, it is backed by the authority of God in whose name it rules and governs.

These principles are deduced from the existence of God the Creator and Ruler of all things; they are principles of sound common sense as well as of the Christian revelation. They are exemplified and illustrated in the foundation of the Christian Church by Jesus Christ.

We have already seen\* that the chief work of Jesus Christ on earth was the foundation of the Christian Church. He called the men and women whom He gathered together under His authority, His sheep, His flock, of whom He was the good Shepherd; He called them His Church, the Kingdom of God, and the Kingdom of Heaven. It was obviously His intention to found a society of men on earth, and He knew well how necessary it was to give the requisite authority to its rulers. He did not wish to expose His Church to the changes and revolutions to which earthly authority is subject. He wished His Church to last even to the consummation of the world. He accordingly determined the nature and the powers of the authority which was to rule His Church to the end of the world. He chose the college of the Apostles and gave it the power of teaching and

\* See Chapter IX.



administering the sacraments by His authority. "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth, Going, therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them."\* "He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me."† As He had forgiven sins so were they also to forgive sins. "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you. . . . Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them."‡ They were to have authority to settle disputes, make laws, and issue precepts. "Amen, I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven."§

But He had too great a love for His Church, and He knew human nature and His Apostles too well to leave anything connected with authority in His Church and the subject of it unsettled and undetermined. He wished the stability of his Church to rest on one, whom He made its foundation, and whom He constituted His Vicar. To Simon, whose name He had changed significantly to Peter (rock), He said: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church. And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (His Church).

The supreme authority vested in Peter was to be the solid foundation on which Christ built His

\* Matt. xxviii. 18.

† Luke x. 16.

‡ John xx. 21.

§ Matt. xviii. 18.

Church. He knew what assaults the Church would have to sustain from the world and from the powers of evil. He pledged His own fidelity that they should never succeed. The other Apostles would be subjected to searching ordeals. They were to find safety in the divine help which was promised to Peter. By having recourse to Peter they would be saved. "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have *you*, that he may sift *you* as wheat. But I have prayed for *thee* that thy faith fail not, and thou being once converted, confirm thy brethren."\* As members of the Church the other Apostles were to rest and rely on Peter as their mainstay, they as sheep of the flock were committed by the supreme Pastor to the care of Peter. Jesus Christ intended His Church to endure to the end of the world. He doubtless made known to the Apostles His plan that they should appoint successors to carry on the work which He had entrusted to them. When the successor of Peter was appointed in a lawful manner, forthwith Christ's commission to Peter was communicated to him. He became the Vicar of Christ, the firm foundation on which the stability and the permanence of the Church rested. That has ever been the faith of the Catholic Church. Other supreme authorities of human societies are only indirectly and remotely divine. When they are lawfully constituted, whatever be the method of

\* Luke xxii. 31.

appointment and whatever be the degree of power which they severally enjoy, God commands that they be loyally obeyed when they use their power rightly. In this sense it may be said that they govern by right divine. On the other hand the power of the Pope is immediately and directly divine. As soon as he is lawfully appointed, Jesus Christ, the God-Man, by the continuing efficacy of His appointment of St. Peter, confers upon St. Peter's successor the plenitude of power by which he governs the Church as the Vicar of Christ. That power does not come from the Church or from any human source. It cannot be limited or taken away by the Church. It is divine and independent of the will of man. In the fullest sense the Pope rules the Catholic Church by divine right. Apart from Gallicans, Jansenists, and some others of similar ideas, this has always been the belief of true Christians. It was a belief which was the mainstay of all lawful authority in the Ages of Faith. Itself confessedly divine, the Church represented the authority of God in the world. By the support of its teaching and influence it kept the divine groundwork of all lawful authority prominently before the minds of the people. The people who heard the Church pray to Almighty God, "O God, by whom kings reign and the princes of the earth exercise their power," were not likely to forget the duty of obedience to lawfully constituted authority.

In the sixteenth century the main attacks of the

Protestant Reformers were directed against the authority of the Pope. In countries where those attacks succeeded the authority of the Pope was discredited and abandoned. So great a change in Christian thought and life could not but seriously affect the prestige of other authorities. With some people the change produced an exaggerated idea of kingly power. By one party in England the peculiarities of the authority of the Pope were transferred with the royal supremacy to the kingly power. This threatened popular liberty and ultimately led to revolution. With others the change tended to an exaggeration of personal independence and individualism, and ultimately produced more disastrous results than the opposite extreme.

Nowadays not only is the divine right of kings discredited, but we are in serious danger of ruin from the rejection of all authority, human or divine. Leo XIII. traced all the ills that afflict modern society to the rejection of the authority of the Church. I cannot do better than quote his well-considered words:

“From the very beginning of our Pontificate, the sad sight has presented itself to us of the evils by which the human race is oppressed on every side: the widespread subversion of the primary truths on which as on its foundations human society is based; the obstinacy of mind that will not brook any authority however lawful; the endless sources of disagreement

whence come civil strife, and ruthless war and bloodshed; the contempt of law which moulds characters, and is the shield of righteousness; the insatiable craving for things perishable with complete forgetfulness of things eternal, leading up to the desperate madness whereby so many wretched beings in all directions scruple not to lay violent hands upon themselves; the reckless mismanagement, waste, and misappropriation of the public funds; the shamelessness of those who, full of treachery, make semblance of being champions of country, of freedom, and every kind of right—in fine, the deadly kind of plague which infects society in its inmost recesses, allowing it no respite and foreboding ever fresh disturbances and final disaster.

“Now the source of these evils lies chiefly, we are convinced, in this, that the holy and venerable authority of the Church, which in God’s name rules mankind, upholding and defending all lawful authority, has been despised and set aside.”\*

Modern society is confessedly sick, many say that it is sick even unto death. Leo XIII. was a skilful physician, he diagnosed the malady correctly. Is there any hope of recovery?

The astute politicians who guided the policy of the German Empire, had a remedy of their own. The world was to be healed by German Kultur backed by Prussian military power. In broad outline the scheme was this. The State was to be omnipotent.

\* Encyclical Letter, April 21, 1878.



It was to domineer over the souls and bodies of the subject masses. It was to direct religion, the schools, and the Universities in the temporal interest of the state. Germany was to be a world power and was to impose its Kultur on all other nations. This was for their good, for German Kultur was the best of its kind, and Germans deserved the first place in the sun. Whatever means might be necessary for the attainment of this end were legitimate and good. The end justifies the means. Might is right. Ruthless war is not only good, it is a glorious thing. Cruelty and hate are its instruments: they are sanctified by the end. In reality the scheme was an abandonment of Christianity and a return to pagan ideals. For the time being, at any rate, it was defeated in the Great War, and the Allies won the victory for liberty.

Is there any alternative to the German scheme? Something must be done. Things cannot remain as they are. If they are allowed to drift, they will inevitably drift in the direction of licence and anarchy. The only alternative lies in a return to the true, full, and entire Christianity taught by Jesus Christ. European civilization is Christian in its source and origin, and it can only be saved by Christianity. That Christianity can save it admits of no doubt, but it must be real Christianity and not a make-believe. The chief element in Christianity, as we have seen more than once, is the Christian Church,



and so, if we want true Christianity, wanderers must return to Christian Unity. It must not be a new sort of Unity, a sort of Confederation of Churches or a religious Republic. If we want true Christianity, a Christianity that will save the world, we must take it as it was preached and founded by Jesus Christ. There must be a return without compromise to the Unity of the Catholic Church.

PLANNED FOR THE  
FUTURE  
AND THE  
FUTURE

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